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THE CHEVALIER

D'EON DE BEAUMONT

LONDON: PRINTED BY  
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AND PARLIAMENT STREET



FRONTISPIECE.



LA CHEVALIERE D'EON.

1782.

From a Painting in the possession of CHARLES LISTON, Esq.

(LATE THE PROPERTY OF CHARLES READE.)

*See Appendix.*

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THE  
STRANGE CAREER  
OF THE  
CHEVALIER D'EON DE BEAUMONT

MINISTER PLENIPOTENTIARY FROM FRANCE TO GREAT BRITAIN  
IN 1763

BY  
CAPTAIN J. BUCHAN TELFER, R.N.  
F.S.A., F.R.G.S.

AUTHOR OF 'THE CRIMEA AND TRANSCAUCASIA' 'THE BONDAGE AND  
TRAVELS OF JOHANN SCHILTBERGER' ETC.

'L'homme d'esprit a dans sa plume  
un juge toujours prêt à le venger des  
affronts qu'on lui fait'—D'EON

With Portraits and Facsimile

LONDON  
LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.  
1885

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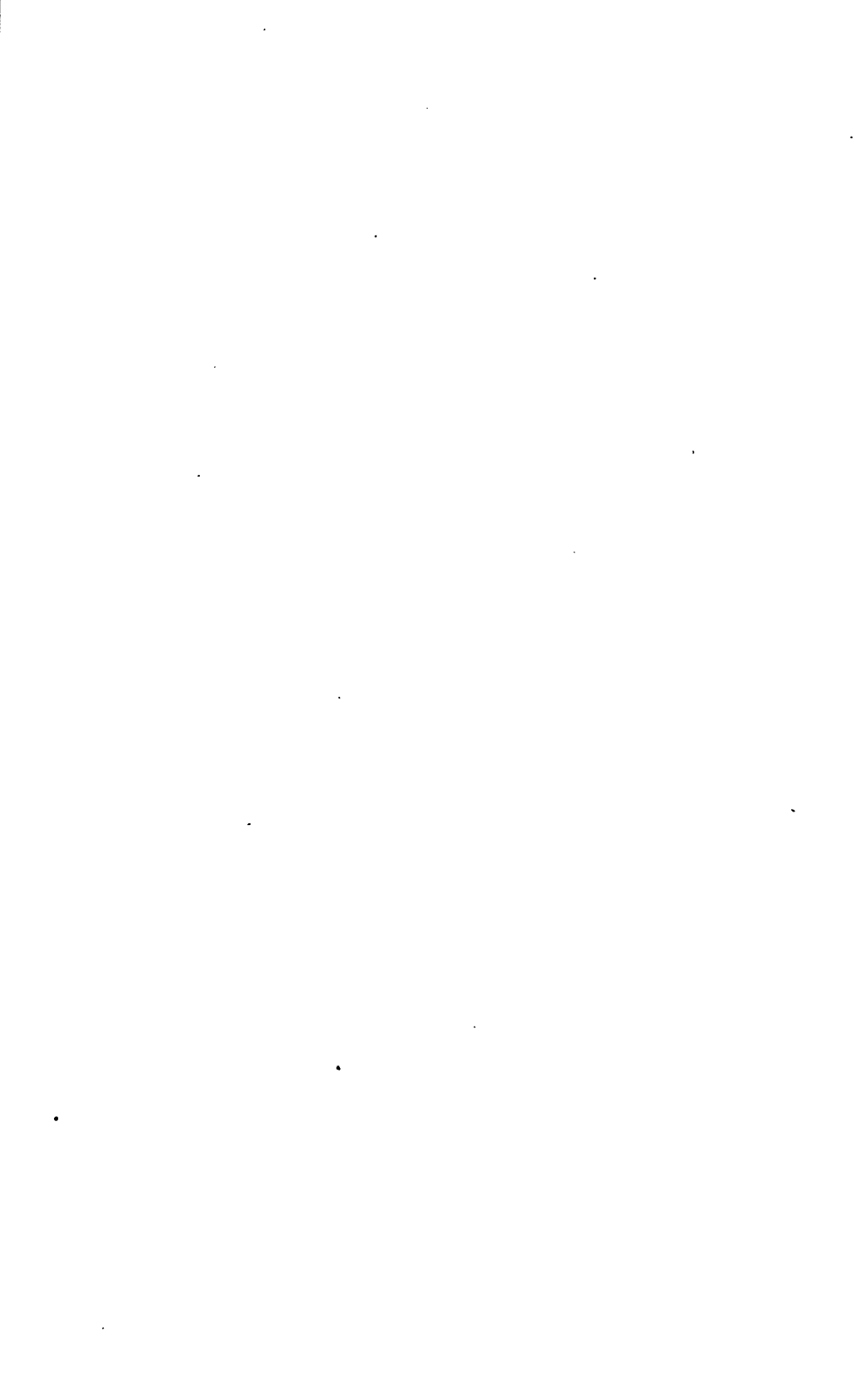
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A

LA VILLE DE TONNERRE



## PREFACE.

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THE Secret Correspondence established by Louis XV. in 1750–1752, originally for the purpose of gratifying the Prince de Conti's ambition for sovereignty, in the interests of Poland, and of securing the alliance and co-operation of several of the smaller Powers, against the aggression of Austria and Russia, proved, in course of years, of inestimable benefit to the King, personally. Insuperable timidity, and the consciousness of a lack of self-confidence, were weaknesses that ill-befitted an absolute monarch, for Louis XV. could never summon courage to confront his ministers. The Chevalier D'Eon de Beaumont very tersely portrays the besetting sin of his sovereign, where he describes it as a deficiency in the needed strength of character to control, as became a king, his ministers and ambassadors, all of whom he mistrusted and avoided, making reparation in secret for the follies they committed publicly. 'Après nous le déluge' are the well-known words of comfort offered by the Marquise de Pompadour, into whose hands the direction of affairs was lapsing, when seeing the King sorely oppressed with grief upon learning the news of the disaster at Rosbach; and perhaps it is true that the secret correspondence, of the existence of which the favourite was entirely ignorant, was useful in averting

the coming storm during the term of his reign. Selfish and self-indulgent almost beyond conception, Louis XV. had no spirit to grapple with difficulties where they presented themselves, except in regard to the relations of France with Foreign Powers, when he could perfectly well rouse himself to action ; not openly, lest the views of his ministers should be in opposition to his desires, but covertly and frequently to their confusion. It was the duty of the secret agents at the several capitals of Europe, who were always connected in some way with his Embassies, to keep his Majesty informed of all that was passing, and it became his custom to instruct them to bring about the realisation of his policy, regardless of the directions of his ministers. Louis XV. took an interest and a delight in foreign affairs, therefore to him the secret correspondence had its uses ; otherwise—it was leading to destruction.

One of the earliest and most remarkable of the King's secret agents, for his employment as such dated from the year 1754 or 1755, was D'Eon de Beaumont, who, as a diplomatist, evinced spirit equal to that of Lord Whitworth under circumstances that have passed into history, and exhibited much of the bravery and daring of the famous Hugh Elliot, without, however, the similar advantage of being enabled to deal all his blows by the light of day, his training from youth having been in the direction rather of intrigue.

Since no history of Louis XV. can have any pretensions to completeness if the name of D'Eon de Beaumont be excluded, it is not a little surprising that the individual acts, as well as the official services of so

extraordinary a personage have never been brought together before the world. This blank the author endeavours to fill.

In 1836, Gaillardet published a memoir of the Chevalier D'Eon, meretricious and spurious in its details, which speedily reached a second edition, and attained a popularity that caused it to be pirated and reproduced, very extensively, in 'Un Hermaphrodite,' Louis Jourdan indiscreetly lending his name for its authorship! Although Gaillardet announced that his book was produced out of material supplied by the D'Eon family at Tonnerre, its contents proved to be in great measure scandalous fabrications. Feeling himself, as he advanced in years, called upon to make some kind of reparation, this author gave, in 1866, a new edition under the title 'Mémoires sur la Chevalière D'Eon. La Vérité sur les Mystères de sa Vie,' in the preface to which, styled 'Un Acte de Contrition, &c.,' he candidly avows that his first edition was in great part a fiction. In this later edition Gaillardet reproduces, together with other interesting matter, numerous documents that are preserved at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, where, by rare good fortune, he obtained permission to search the archives; and that so distinguished an academician as the Duke de Broglie (familiar to Englishmen as having been first minister in the Conservative days of the French Republic), as well as other well-known authors, should have availed themselves of this work, may be accepted as sufficient guarantee of its worth and reliability. As becomes a conscientious biographer, Gaillardet allows the documents he produces to speak for

themselves, without himself undertaking to pass judgment on his subject; a safe course adopted in the following pages, where scrupulous care is taken to authenticate all that is adduced.

In his engaging work, '*Le Secret du Roi*,' the Duke de Broglie treats at some length on the part taken by D'Eon in the secret correspondence of Louis XV. Unhappily, the Duke seems desirous of avenging the agony of mind his ancestor the Count de Broglie must have endured, upon certain occasions of the threatening attitude assumed by the Chevalier, and he evidently finds it impossible to forgive the Minister Plenipotentiary, D'Eon, for being more clever, abler, and readier-witted than the French Ambassador with whom it was his misfortune to be connected; for his Grace takes frequent occasion to traduce him, and calls attention to his '*assertions mensongères*,' without clearly substantiating the grave charges—a hard measure where the person assailed is beyond the possibility of vindicating the accusation. The fact is that D'Eon related unpleasant truths, and exposed startling facts, as will be manifested in due course.

Few persons, in all probability, have left behind them so much matter in MS. as did the Chevalier D'Eon, if we except perhaps the Duke of Berwick and the noted Saint-Simon, of whom Chateaubriand said: '*. . . il avait heureusement un tour à lui; il écrivit à la diable pour l'immortalité.*' Like Saint-Simon, the Chevalier sketched admirable portraits, and like Saint-Simon too, he commenced in early youth to write his impressions, keeping to himself, through life, all he had

written. There is evidence, amongst the papers the author has consulted, that D'Eon never contemplated an autobiography. 'It has ever been my opinion,' he wrote, 'and I am even persuaded, that it is impossible for an author to write a just history of his own life ; for he is either lifted to the height of vanity by pride so inseparable from the human heart, or else feigned modesty debases him to hypocritical humility. There are, at Versailles, public dépôts of the Ministries for War and for Foreign Affairs, and Louis XV. has left his private papers of the Secret Correspondence. It is there that the faithful historian should seek the truth if he has the courage to tell it.' Unfortunately, there is reason for apprehending that many MSS., some of consequence, are lost. Père Elisée, the Chevalière's medical attendant, had a large number of his papers, which were seen in the possession of M. Nicolas de Chenart, about the years 1824-1828, by a correspondent, in 'Notes and Queries.' They may now possibly form a part or the whole of the collection of D'Eon MSS. at the British Museum, and at Tonnerre where they are numerous. Another large portion passed into the hands of Mr. Christie, to whom the Chevalière was indebted for many favours. The first and last of these collections have been well sifted by the author, the chief difficulty experienced being the making a judicious selection. It was quite possible to have enlarged on the acts and writings of the Chevalier or Chevalière D'Eon, by the introduction of additional portraits, anecdotes, and letters of interest, but—happy is the biographer who escapes the charge of tedious

prolixity ! The author feels that although the material at his disposal has been greatly condensed, the thread of the narrative is maintained in its completeness, without the omission of any incident of importance in the life of the most singular and of one of the most extraordinary individuals of the last century.

There can be no exaggeration in the assertion that the life of the Chevalier or Chevalière D'Eon de Beaumont is unique in the history of the world. At any rate, the author is prepared to confess his ignorance of any record of its equal.

Cases of females having occupied the position of men, whether for a limited period or during their entire existence, are without number, striking instances of both, within the recollection of the present generation, being those of Captain (Marie Jeanne) Dubois, who served in Napoleon's Russian campaign, and of a medical officer in the service of Her Most Gracious Majesty the Queen, who have passed away of late years. Upon the other hand, few men have disguised themselves as females, the most notable example of the kind, perhaps, being that afforded by the Comtesse des Barres, who for thirty years led a dissolute and discreditable life, but was perfectly well known to be the Abbé de Choisy. The biographer of this creature, Thouliez d'Olivet, says of him : ' But what sort of a hero is he whose portrait I am to describe ? A Court Abbé ? . . . what do I say ? A Court Abbé ! A coquette who had one thousand times greater taste for beauty spots and ribbons, one thousand times more the desire to please, than any professional coquette. It



may be said that Nature made a mistake, and that it was her intention to create a female;' then, quoting a lady's estimate of the Abbé: ' . . . male or female, ever carrying matters to extremes, whether absorbed in studies or in trifles. Deserving of esteem, because of undaunted courage, contemptible because of the coquetry of a young maiden, and in whichever character, at all times engaged in the pursuit of pleasure.' The Chevalier D'Eon, whose ambiguity of sex was suggested in infancy and maintained until death, cannot be classed with either of the above. Female or male, D'Eon appeared as cither in obedience to command, having done good service to King and Country, and we have the authority of John Britton, who was in the habit of meeting the Chevalière almost daily, during a period of three years, that she was respectable and respected, and of refined manners. The uncertainty of her sex occupied every mind. In branding the tale of Pope Joan as being *false* and deserving the name, Gibbon shows himself to be at fault with regard to D'Eon. ' . . . I would not pronounce it (the tale) incredible. Suppose a famous French chevalier of our own times to have been born in Italy, and educated in the Church instead of in the army; *her* merit or fortune *might* have raised her to St. Peter's chair; her amours would have been natural. . . . '

D'Eon's immediate ancestors were in the habit, it would appear, of writing their family name, Déon. Upon being accredited Resident, and afterwards Minister Plenipotentiary at the Court of Great Britain, Louis XV. was pleased to distinguish the Chevalier's

name by substituting E for e, changing Déon to D'Eon, orthography the author has observed with reference to the Chevalier. Late in life, the Chevalière wrote her name, occasionally d'Eon, at other times D'eon, until the French Revolution, when, for a season, her signature appears as Déon, bearing the prefix, La Citoyenne Geneviève.

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In concluding these introductory remarks, the author has one pleasant duty left, that of offering his acknowledgments to Mr. JAMES H. B. CHRISTIE, of Framingham, Norwich, and King Street, St. James', and of expressing his obligations to that gentleman for the liberality and freedom with which he has been permitted to consult the interesting MSS., short of which it would have been simply impossible to produce, in its present form, the account of this Strange Career.

LONDON, *December*, 1884.

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*Erratum.*

*For 32 Brewer Street, Golden Square, as being the residence in London of the Chevalier D'Eon during thirty-three years, read 38 Brewer Street, Golden Square.*



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 CHARLOTTE-GENEVIÈVE-LOUISA-AUGUSTA-ANDRÉE-TIMOTHÉE-MARIE

## D'EON DE BEAUMONT.

Doctor of Civil and of Canon Law, and Advocate of the Parliament of Paris.

Censor Royal for History and Belles-Lettres.

Sent to Russia, first secretly, then officially, with the Chevalier Douglas for the Purpose of re-establishing friendly Relations between that Country and France.

Secretary of the Embassy Extraordinary at the Court of Her Imperial Majesty, the Empress Elizabeth.

Captain of Dragoons and Aide-de-Camp to Marshal the Duke and to the Count de Broglie.

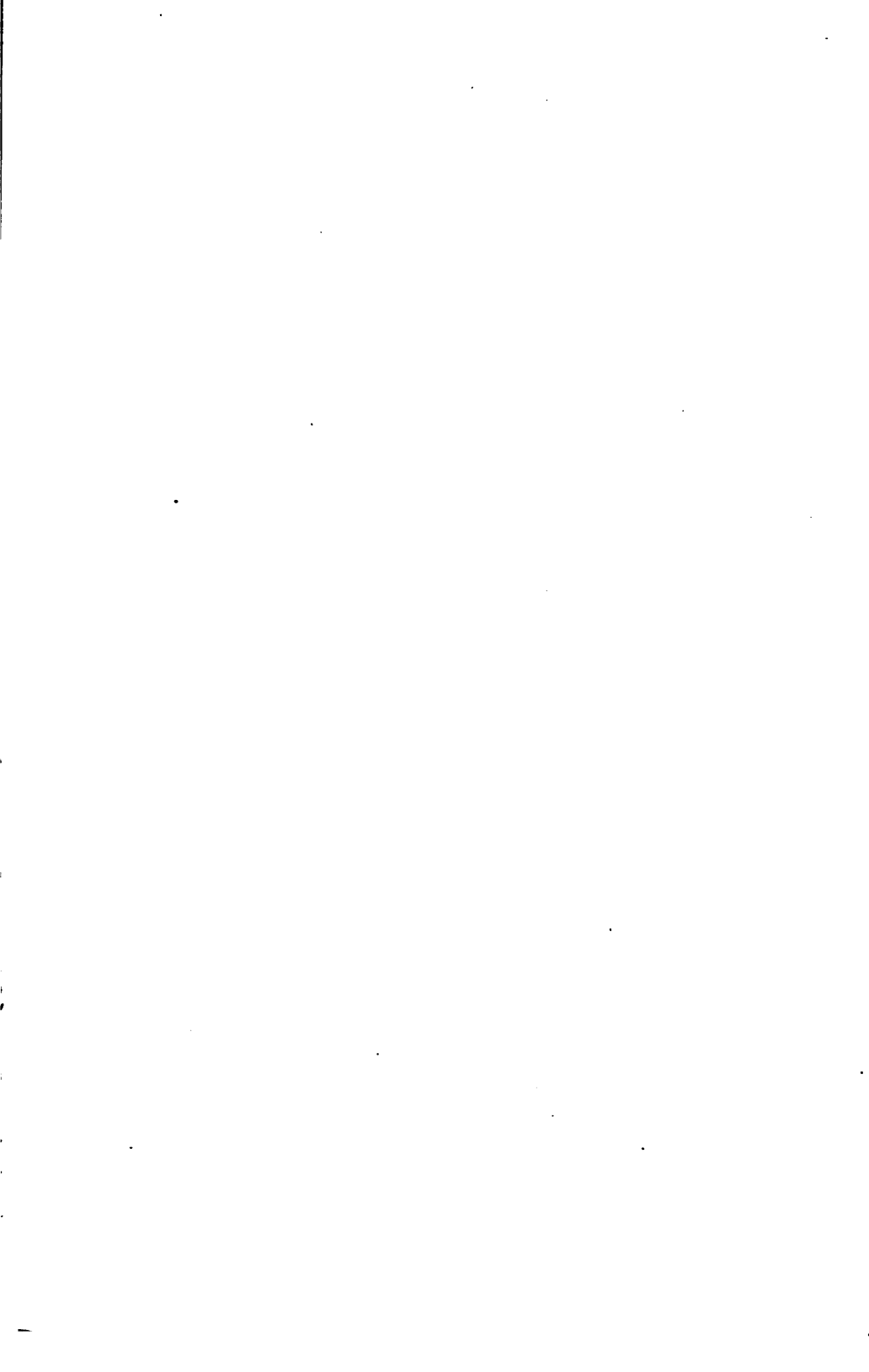
Secretary of the Embassy Extraordinary from France to Great Britain for concluding the Peace of 1763.

Knight of the Royal and Military Order of Saint Louis.

Resident, and afterwards Minister Plenipotentiary  
 from France to Great Britain,  
 and, finally,

a Lady at the Court of Marie Antoinette,  
 and an occasional and honoured Inmate  
 at

L'Abbaye Royale des Dames de Hautes Bruyères,  
 La Maison des Demoiselles de St. Cyr,  
 and at the  
 Monastère des Filles de Ste. Marie.



# THE CHEVALIER

## D'EON DE BEAUMONT.

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### CHAPTER I.

6  
Birth of D'Eon de Beaumont and registry as a male-child—Parentage—Consecrated to the Virgin Mary and admitted to the Sisterhood—Pursues studies as a boy—Early display of abilities—As secret agent, is sent to Russia by Louis XV.—Reception at St. Petersburg—Enemies and friends—Leaves for Versailles—Invited to enter the service of Russia.

‘THE deeper the search in the annals of my family,’ wrote the subject of this Memoir, ‘the purer, more stainless, and more distinguished will it prove to be. One member only, Eon de l’Etoile,<sup>1</sup> was condemned by the Council of Rheims in the year 1148; but how many emperors, kings, and men of letters have been condemned and proscribed by popes and councils, legally or illegally. There is a vast difference between condemnation by the priesthood for gross errors in matters of religion, and condemnation by judges for the crimes of high treason, assassination, murder, and poisoning.

‘The possession of a name and noble descent, of which the origin is lost in obscurity, has ever been considered amongst civilised nations a more respectable title than one of recent date, owed to the favour of a king—favour accorded more frequently to weakness than to courage, to vice than to virtue. We know the secret motives by which kings are guided in their public

<sup>1</sup> Accused of being a fanatic, Eon de l’Etoile was committed to prison by the Council of Rheims on March 22, 1148, and died a few days later of the ill-treatment to which he was subjected by those in whose charge he was placed. See De Bois de la Chesnaye’s *Genealogical Dictionary*, for the D’Eon family.

acts, since the time that they have become attended by valets, mistresses, ministers, cabinet ministers, and historiographers.'<sup>1</sup>

On the first page of a well-thumbed devotional pamphlet in MS., given to D'Eon de Beaumont upon his entering the Collège Mazarin, at Paris, in 1740, appears the following in that person's own hand :—

'I was born on the 5th, and baptised on October 7, 1728, at the parish church of Notre Dame, Tonnerre. I was confirmed in front of the high altar of the parish church of St. Sulpitius in Paris; and on Thursday, June 18, 1744, I communicated for the first time in the chapel of the Virgin at the parish church of St. Sulpitius, Paris.'<sup>2</sup>

The baptismal certificate is as follows :—

'On October 7, 1728, was baptised Charles-Geneviève-Louis-Auguste-André-Thimothée, son of the noble Louis Déon de Beaumont, director of the King's demesnes, and of dame Françoise de Charenton, his father and mother legitimately married, born on the 5th of the present month. His godfather is M. Charles Regnard, advocate of Parliament, bailiff of Cruzy; and godmother, dame Geneviève Déon, wife of M. Mouton, wine merchant at Paris, all of whom affix their signatures :—

'G. DEON.

'MOUTON.

'C. REGNARD.

'BORDES, Dean of Tonnerre.'

Louis Déon de Beaumont was advocate in Parliament, King's counsellor, sub-delegate of the Intendance of the generality of Paris, and for some time mayor of Tonnerre. His brothers were André-Thimothée Déon de Tissey, advocate in Parliament, censor-royal, chief secretary of police in Paris, and principal secretary to H.R.H. the Duke d'Orleans; Jacques Déon de Pommard, advocate in Parliament, one of the first secretaries to the Count d'Argenson, Minister of War; Michel Déon

<sup>1</sup> Ch. MSS. 161.

<sup>2</sup> Ch. MSS.

de Germigny, knight of the Royal and Military Order of St. Louis, one of the twenty-five gentlemen of the King's Scottish Guard. They were the four sons of André Déon, advocate in Parliament, who died in 1720; whose father was Louis Déon, lord of Ramelu, esquire, captain of infantry: all of whom lie interred within the church of L'Hôpital Notre Dame de Fontenilles, at Tonnerre.<sup>1</sup>

In the preamble to her holograph will, headed 'Soli Deo Honor et Gloria,' in which she styles herself Charlotte-Geneviève-Louise-Augusta-Andrée-Timothea-Marie D'Eon de Beaumont, it is stated:—

'Although already provided with six names, my mother having in her special devotion consecrated me in my infancy to the Virgin, the additional name of Marie was given to me at my confirmation by Panquet de Gersy, archbishop of Seurre. This name has become precious to me, because Marie has become my protectress in heaven, as Marie Antoinette was my queen protectress on earth, after my return to France.'

In another place D'Eon states that when in her fourth year she was publicly consecrated to the Virgin Mary, in front of the high altar, at a solemn service held for the occasion. She wore the robe of the sisterhood of the Virgin Mary until her seventh year, when she resumed boy's apparel by direction of her father. To her mother's fervent devotion and enlightened piety in the protection of the Virgin Mary was attributed the safety of the 'disguised daughter' in all the perils she encountered in the course of her extraordinary career—by sea and by land, at foreign courts, at sieges, in combats and in battles.<sup>2</sup>

From the age of seven to twelve D'Eon remained in charge of M. Marceney, curé of the Church of St. Peter,

<sup>1</sup> De la Fortelle, 120.

<sup>2</sup> Ch. MSS.

and was then sent to the Collège Mazarin. He completed his studies with considerable credit, obtaining the degrees of Doctor of Civil and of Canon Law, and being subsequently called to the bar of the Parliament of Paris. He also became royal censor for works on history and belles-lettres. In 1749, whilst serving as secretary to M. Bertier de Savigny, he had the misfortune to lose in the course of five days his father, an uncle, and an income of fifteen thousand livres. Louis Déon had rendered himself so beloved by the poor in his district that for some time after his death they used to resort in crowds to his grave and weep over it, and lament the loss of their friend and benefactor. It is related of him that when on his death-bed, and after having received the last sacrament, he sent for his daughter (afterwards the Chevalier), and taking her by the hand, said tenderly, 'Do not be uneasy, my daughter—it is as natural to die as it is to live. I am quitting a bad for a better land. I have been at much pains to teach you how to live, and I must likewise teach you how to die.' And giving her his blessing, he expired.<sup>1</sup>

Although D'Eon had lost his father, he was not left friendless; for he remained under the protection of several persons of influence, who had known the relatives he had lost, there being amongst them the Prince de Conti, the Abbé de Bernis (subsequently Minister for Foreign Affairs), the Marshal de Belle-Isle (afterwards Minister for War), also the Duchess de Penthièvre and the Count d'Ons-en-Bray, whose funeral eulogiums, inserted in the '*Année Littéraire*,' were the earliest products of his pen. These writings were succeeded by an

<sup>1</sup> *Rede's Anecdotes and Biography.* London, 1779.



historical essay on finance in France, and 'Notes on the Life and Works of the celebrated Abbé Lenglet de Fresnoy,' printed in the 'Année Littéraire' for 1755, literary labours which served to bring him into notice at an early age as a thoughtful and careful writer.

D'Eon was passionately fond of study, and would only quit his books for what became his sole recreation in life—the art of fencing, in which he proved a great expert, as shown by his election to the superintendence of the School of Arms. D'Eon's tastes inclined him to a military life, rather than to what the necessities of his situation were calling him; but his destiny summoned him to take a part in the political transactions of his country, with what success it is the object of this work to show.

In his desire to renew with Russia the friendly relations interrupted since the day when the Marquis de la Chétardie was unceremoniously escorted to the frontier (June 13, 1744), Louis XV. had dispatched to St. Petersburg, in the year 1754, the Chevalier de Valcroissant on a secret mission for that purpose—a mission, however, that came to an untimely end; for the Chevalier, being unprovided with any kind of credential or letter of recommendation, was taken up on suspicion of being a French spy, and confined in the fortress of Schlusselfurg, on the Ladoga, whence it was not deemed prudent, for the time being at least, to seek to liberate him.<sup>1</sup> The Empress Elizabeth had already made advances of a friendly nature to the French Court, and in view of her possible treaty of subsidies with England, the King resolved upon another effort towards reconciliation, taking more effectual precautions to ensure success.

<sup>1</sup> Valcroissant obtained his liberty after a twelvemonth's confinement, through the instrumentality of D'Eon. *Lett. Mém. &c.* 1, 5.

The person selected for this important, secret, and even hazardous service, was a native of North Britain, named Mackenzie, but known as the Chevalier Douglas, who represented himself as having followed the fortunes of the Pretender and obliged to seek refuge in France, bringing with him 'nothing but his nobility,' when in reality he was a Jesuit in disguise, had lived at Liège during the late war, employed as a spy by Holland, and had afterwards entered the service of the Prince Waldeck.<sup>1</sup> When invited to proceed to Russia he was tutor in the family of the Intendant of Paris, and passing under the name of Michel.

The importance and delicate nature of the negotiations upon which Douglas was about to be employed—and not Douglas only, but D'Eon also, sent with the King's approval, at the strong recommendation of the Prince de Conti (whose special *protégé* he was), to accompany Douglas—will best be estimated upon knowledge of the instructions—widely though they differed—supplied for their respective guidance. They show that whilst Douglas was secretly to watch and note events as an apparently indifferent observer, it was intended that D'Eon should pass his time in closest intimacy with such Russian ministers as might be favourably disposed towards France, and reach, were it possible, even the Empress herself.

*Instructions to the Chevalier Douglas on proceeding to Russia.*

'June 1, 1755.

'The general situation of Europe, the troubles in Poland during the past year, others apprehended in the same quarter, the part taken in them by the Court of Petersburg, the probability that it is about to conclude, shortly, a treaty of subsidies

<sup>1</sup> *Russia Correspondence*, Public Record Office.

with England through the Chevalier Williams, appointed Ambassador by his Britannic Majesty to the Emperor of Russia; everything points to the necessity for watching the proceedings and attitude of that Court with the closest attention.

‘His Majesty has not been represented there by any ambassador, minister, or even a consul, for a long time past, so that its condition is almost entirely unknown, especially as the character of the people, and the jealous and suspicious despotism of their ministers, disallows such correspondence as is customary in other countries.

‘It is considered desirable to despatch a competent person, with the view of obtaining reliable information on what is passing at the Court of Russia; he will not let it appear that he is in any public or private capacity, and will return immediately to make his report. A Frenchman would not answer the purpose. Notwithstanding the friendship which the Empress of Russia is supposed to entertain towards his Majesty, and her partiality towards the French nation, a subject of the King would be watched too closely by the ministry in Russia to be of any service, under whatsoever pretext he might cloak the object of his journey. It is on this account that —— has been chosen, who, being a subject of the King of Great Britain, will not excite suspicion. The favourable reports that have been received of his intelligence and zeal give reason to hope that he will execute this commission with success.

‘It is intended that he should take his departure in the quietest manner possible, as a gentleman travelling solely for his health and amusement. Such is the custom amongst many of his countrymen, so that he will not attract attention. He must not appear to have any relations with his Majesty’s ministers, whether in France or in the course of his travels, and he must not see any of them at the several places through which he will pass. He will be supplied with an ordinary passport. To avoid being interrogated at any of the great courts in Germany, his presence perhaps exciting curiosity, it is desirable that he should enter Germany through Swabia, whence he will pass into Bohemia under pretext of visiting for his own instruction the several mines in that kingdom. His acquaintance with mineralogy will afford a pretext for this journey. From

Bohemia he will pass into Saxony, visiting the mines at Freiberg for similar reasons. Having there satisfied his curiosity, he will go on to Dantzic, either by way of Silesia, Warsaw, and Thorn, or by Brandenburgian Pomerania, proceeding to Frankfort-on-the-Oder, and thence to Dantzic by such route as may best suit him. He will make a stay of some days in this city for the purpose of thoroughly examining the causes that have led for some years past to the continued strife between the chief magistrate and the burgesses, and to discover, if possible, the cause of these dissensions, what it is that foment them, and if they are encouraged by any foreign power. Thence he will continue his journey through Prussia and Courland, where he will also make a stay under pretext of needing rest ; but for the purpose of learning the state of that duchy, what the nobles think of the exile and deposition of the Prince of Courland, and the views of the Russian Ministry for the government of that principality. He will also make himself acquainted with the manner in which justice and the revenues are there administered, and the number of Russian troops in occupation. From Courland he will pass into Livonia, and follow the high road to St. Petersburg. His first care on arrival will be to make known, without any affectation, the reasons for undertaking his journey, which is one of pure curiosity. He will endeavour to make the acquaintance of those able to supply him with the information of which he is in search. He cannot observe too great caution in his mode of procedure to obtain information ; he must not evince partiality for any one nation more than for another. Although the causes that have necessitated his departure from England would appear to prevent him from making the acquaintance of the Chevalier Williams ; still, if as he asserts, he is quite unknown, he might make it a point to see him as every Englishman would his minister. He will make himself acquainted as secretly as possible with the success of that minister's negotiations for the troops with which England is to be supplied, and with the number of troops that Russia has actually at command ; with the condition of her fleets, her ships and galleys ; with the state of her finance, commerce, and the disposition of the nation towards the present ministry ; the degree of Count Bestoujeff's influence ; that of Count Woronzoff ; of the Empress' favourites,

whether in affairs of State or in the pursuit of pleasure ; their probable influence on ministers ; the concord or jealousy that exists amongst ministers, and their bearing towards the favourites ; with the fate of Prince Ivan, the late Tzar, and of the Duke of Brunswick, his father ; the affection of the nation towards the Grand Duke of Russia, and especially since the birth of his son ; whether Prince Ivan has secret partisans, and if they are supported by England ; the desire of the Russians to live in peace, and of their disinclination for war, more especially in Germany ; the views of Russia in regard to Poland, for the present, and in whatsoever eventuality in the future ; with her projects on Sweden ; with the impression produced by the death of the Sultan Mahmoud, and Osman's accession to the throne ; with her conduct in regard to the Porte ; with the causes that have led to the recall from the Ukraine of Count Razoumoffsky, hetman of Cossacks ; with what is thought of the loyalty of those people, and the manner in which they are treated by the Court of Petersburg ; with the Empress' sentiments towards France, and those with which she is in all probability inspired by her 'ministry, to prevent her from renewing correspondence with his Majesty ; with the factions by which the Court may be divided ; with those of her subjects, male or female, in whom the Empress is able to confide ; with her sentiments and those of her ministers towards the Courts of Vienna and London ; with all, in short, that can be of interest to his Majesty's service, and satisfy his curiosity. He will obtain all this information so far as such an uncommunicative country will allow him to. He will take notes on all these subjects to serve for a memoir which he will draw up, and send to France only after he will have quitted Russia, unless the Swedish minister at Petersburg, who will receive instructions to forward despatches to Stockholm by courier, should send any to Sweden. He must never risk anything through the ordinary post except notice of his arrival, and a report of the progress he is making in obtaining information as required above ; and to do this he must employ, in a few words, figurative language, agreed upon beforehand, and send his letters to addresses with which he will be furnished.

' So soon as he feels that he has fairly well obtained all the

required information, he will make a report to that effect, and will then receive orders to return to France, either by the same route or through Sweden, again under pretext of visiting mines, that he may continue to conceal the real object of his journey. On the manner in which he will execute so important and delicate a commission, will depend the prospect of his Majesty again making use of his talents and zeal, as also the favours with which his Majesty will mark his appreciation of his services.'

*Figurative language to be employed by the Chevalier Douglas in his correspondence committed to the ordinary post.*

'The basis of the figurative language will be the purchase of furs. The "black fox" will signify the Chevalier Williams; if he succeeds, the "black fox" will be dear, because orders to purchase have been received from England.

'The words "ermine is in demand," will signify that the Russian party dominates, and that consequently no foreigners are in favour. If, on the contrary, the Austrian party, at the head of which is M. de Bestucheff, preponderates, word must be sent that the "lynx" is also in demand.

'To designate the waning influence of M. de Bestucheff, this phrase is to be employed: "the price of *sobols* or *sables* is falling;" or "they stand at the same price," to indicate that his influence continues the same. "Squirrel skins" are to signify troops in the pay of England. To understand this clearly, the number of skins to be sent will always be augmented by two-thirds to signify the number of troops, so that ten skins will signify thirty thousand men, and twenty, sixty or seventy.

'—— will not write to say that he will send the furs, but he will simply advise that he will bring them with him upon his return.

'In passing through Dantzic —— will send one of his servants to Graudenz, a small town in Polish Prussia, there to post a letter, in which he will advise as to what he may have learnt at Dantzic on the subject of the existing dissensions between the chief magistrate and the burghesses. This letter to be addressed to ——.

'These letters will be in the form of bills of exchange, and according to the greater or less success in the inquiries made, upon which will depend the length of stay; notice should be given whether or no remittances are needed. If nothing can be done, —— will report that the climate is injurious to his health, and that he is in want of a remittance to enable him to go elsewhere.

'If —— is not to go to Sweden, he will receive for answer that since his health suffers, it is considered to his advantage that he should return directly. If, on the contrary, it is deemed expedient that he should proceed, the same will be intimated to him in the form of advice. If it is considered necessary that he should return, the remark will be made to him that a muff has been obtained here, and that consequently he is requested not to purchase one.

'The whole of this, written in small characters and epitomised, will be placed by —— in the false bottom of a tortoise-shell snuff-box, which will not induce any suspicion.'<sup>1</sup>

The duties confided to D'Eon were entirely distinct and of a more intimate nature. He was supplied by M. Tercier, chief clerk at the Foreign Office and in charge of the King's secret correspondence, with a quarto copy of Montesquieu's '*Esprit des Lois*,' the binding, in double boards, being cunningly devised to hold papers. The documents thus concealed and entrusted to D'Eon included private letters from the King to the Empress Elizabeth; a cypher for the intelligence of her Imperial Majesty and Count Woronzoff, the Vice-Chancellor, in their correspondence with Louis XV.;<sup>2</sup> a cypher for D'Eon's own correspondence with the King and Tercier, and another cypher for D'Eon's use in communicating with the Prince de Conti,

<sup>1</sup> Gaill. 373-377.

<sup>2</sup> This correspondence, arranged by Woronzoff and D'Eon, was not fully commenced until 1757. See *Mémoire on the Secret Correspondence in Russia, 1757-1774*, by the Count de Broglie. Boutaric, ii. 465.

Tercier, and M. Monin. He received strict injunctions that none of the King's ministers, not even any ambassador his Majesty might have at St. Petersburg, should be allowed to entertain the slightest suspicion of this secret intercourse; he was ordered to furnish the King with copies of all letters received from the Minister for Foreign Affairs, together with the Ambassador's replies, noting thereon his own observations, and he was further required to thwart clandestinely any transactions on the part of the King's ministers, so long as they were in opposition to the secretly known royal will and pleasure.<sup>1</sup>

Douglas then left Paris in the summer of 1755 as a British tourist, an amateur geologist travelling in search of health and amusement, and having got to Anhalt, he there waited until D'Eon joined him. Proceeding on his journey, Douglas strictly followed the route traced out in his instructions, and when at Dantzic, where as at Amsterdam and Leipzig he had large credits, he announced his intention to visit the mines in Sweden; but suddenly changing his mind, he started for St. Petersburg, where he arrived in the earliest days of October. He lost no time in making his appearance at the British embassy, and introducing himself as a subject of the King and a relative of the Earl of Morton, requested Sir Hanbury Williams to present him at Court. This the British Ambassador refused to do unless he was properly assured of his identity. Scarcely was Douglas gone, than the Swedish minister called to ask Sir Hanbury whether he objected to his presenting the Chevalier Douglas at Court. Sir Hanbury promptly replied that he did not see what business the Swedish minister had

<sup>1</sup> D'Eon to the Count de Vergennes, May 28, 1776: *Archives des affaires étrangères*. Gaill. 23. D'Eon to Louis XVI.: Ch. MSS. 861.



to present the King's subjects, and if he ever attempted such a thing, he would take it very ill; upon which the Swedish minister said that he should no longer meddle in the affair. Douglas then went to see Count Esterhazy, the Ambassador from Vienna, whose suspicions he immediately awakened by explaining his presence at St. Petersburg as due to the advice of his physicians that he should seek a cold climate for the benefit of his health. Finding all access to the Russian Court thus closed against him, Douglas precipitately left the capital and returned to France, bitterly complaining of Sir Hanbury's treatment in every town through which he passed.<sup>1</sup>

We are left quite in the dark as to the means by which D'Eon succeeded in obtaining admission at Court, but the matter was doubtless arranged by the Vice-Chancellor Woronzoff, friendly to France, through the Swedish minister, to whom Douglas had brought letters of introduction from the Swedish minister at Paris, or possibly through Michel, a French banker, as stated by La Messalière. There is good evidence in support of the tradition that D'Eon was received by the Empress in female habiliments, that in this disguise she ingratiated herself with her Majesty, gained her confidence, and interesting her in the object of his mission, had succeeded in reviving her old feelings of attachment towards France and towards Louis XV., her suitor of days gone by.<sup>2</sup> It is certain that the ill-humour and coldness of the Russian Court towards England in the course of the year 1756, was of much earlier date than the Neutrality Convention between Prussia and England (January 16, 1756), and this was attributed by Sir Hanbury, together with the Empress's delay in signing the ratifications to her Treaty of Subsidies with Great Britain, entirely to the

<sup>1</sup> *Russia Correspondence*, Public Record Office.

<sup>2</sup> See Argument.

success of French influence after Douglas had first made his appearance ;<sup>1</sup> but Douglas not being at all in Russia between the end of October 1755, and the end of April 1756, such exercise of French influence could only have been due to elaborate intrigues on the part of D'Eon during the several months he spent at Court as reader (*lecteur*) to the Empress,<sup>2</sup> an appointment conferred upon him, perhaps, with the design of cloaking his real profession.

In early life D'Eon was of peculiarly prepossessing appearance ; his manners were gentle and engaging, his disposition soft and amiable, all of which, with his general physique, eminently adapted him to personify a female ; and if there is no direct proof in substantiation of the oft-told tale that D'Eon appeared at the Court of Elizabeth in female attire, there is at least valuable evidence in support of it.

It may be mentioned in regard to D'Eon's looks, that during his second stay at St. Petersburg, when secretary of Embassy, a Russian officer one day observed to him that with his hair so neatly powdered he greatly resembled the infant Jesus. D'Eon, who throughout his career showed the greatest aversion to any kind of remark on his feminine appearance, and disliked, besides, all that was Russian, very pertly replied : ' Yes, you are right, for I happen to be in a very dirty manger.'<sup>3</sup>

During Douglas' absence D'Eon was putting his intelligence and tact to the best use in the service of his master, his task being rendered somewhat easier by Elizabeth's kindly feelings towards France and the French, which had never entirely changed,<sup>4</sup> even though

<sup>1</sup> *Russia Correspondence*, Public Record Office.      <sup>2</sup> Campan, i. 190

<sup>3</sup> Note Book, dated 1754 : Ch. MSS.

<sup>4</sup> Elizabeth was much prepossessed in favour of the English. Being



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*To face page 14.*



D'EON DE BEAUMONT.  
AGED 25.

*See Appendix.*



her two favourites, the Marquis de la Chétardie and the Count Lestocq, had long since been disposed of; the first, as already stated, by being thrust out of the empire, the latter—of whom in allusion to his treachery her Majesty said: ‘If Lestocq could have poisoned all Russia with one dose, he would assuredly have done so’—by being tortured and exiled to Oustouk. D’Eon had wisely commenced by insinuating himself in the good graces of the Vice-Chancellor, whose predilections were completely French, and who being married to the Countess Skavronsky, a cousin of the Empress, proved his powerful support and shield against the Grand Chancellor Bestoujeff Riumin, the known leader of the Prussian party hostile to France.

But five years before this Bestoujeff had so effectually prejudiced the mind of Elizabeth against Prussia, that her ambassador, Gross, very hastily and unceremoniously took his departure one morning from Berlin, without in the least troubling himself to announce his intentions to anybody. Since that time, Bestoujeff fancied he saw good cause for changing his views.

Peter, the son of Anna Petrovna, by her marriage with Charles Frederick, Duke of Holstein-Gottorp, could never forget his German birth and parentage, and even after being created a Grand Duke of Russia, he continued to attach far greater importance to his title of Holstein-Gottorp, remaining perfectly indifferent to the interests of the Russian people, and maintaining about him a suite and retinue consisting entirely of Germans. His consort, Catherine of Anhalt-Zerbst (afterwards Catherine II.), sought, on the contrary, to identify her-

great admirer of their fashions, and wishing to introduce them at her Court, she had dolls sent to her in the various dresses worn, and which were fitted by Miss Church of St. James’s Street.

self with the country of her adoption, embracing the religion, and following the manners and customs of the people. Politically, she desired a good understanding with England, entirely deprecating alliance with France and Austria; and when the report of the probable arrival of a French ambassador was gaining ground, she expressed her uneasiness to Sir Hanbury, saying she should act up to anything he might suggest to prevent such a thing. Sir Hanbury reminded Catherine that her known confidence in Bestoujeff had made the Schouvaloffs her secret enemies; but that the latter, in themselves, had neither sense, courage, nor money enough to do any harm to her succession, although the arrival of a French ambassador might change the scene, for he would do all in his power, sparing neither pains nor money, to injure her. Catherine's feelings were perfectly well known to Elizabeth, who used to say of her that 'she was a clever woman, only she prided herself on being more clever than anybody else.' The most powerful man at Court because the greatest favourite was Ivan Schouvaloff. He was fond of everything that was French, understood their language, followed all their fashions, and was known to have always wished that a French ambassador might arrive at St. Petersburg. Small causes produce great effects, and the reconciliation proceeding between Russia and France was partly owing to the caprice of that young man.<sup>1</sup>

Bestoujeff, foreseeing the more probable course of events, seized the opportunity for turning his coat, and assuring the grand-duchess of his devotion to her person and to her views, and for expressing to the grand-duke, her husband, his own desire for the maintenance of good relations with Prussia. English, French, Austrian,

<sup>1</sup> *Russia Correspondence*, Public Record Office.



and even Prussian gold was being freely scattered at St. Petersburg,<sup>1</sup> but in the end D'Eon, Schouvaloff, and Woronzoff obtained every advantage over the grand-ducal party. Consenting to receive a French representative at her Court, Elizabeth wrote privately to Louis XV. to that effect, the letter being carried to its destination by D'Eon, in his volume '*Esprit des Lois*,' after Douglas' return from Versailles. We cannot undertake to fix the date of D'Eon's departure from St. Petersburg nearer than that a letter of June 12, 1756, from Sir Hanbury Williams to the Earl of Holderness, announces 'a creature of the Vice-Chancellor is soon to set out from hence to Paris to negotiate this affair.' In parting with D'Eon, the Empress invited him to enter her service, promising honourable and lucrative employment; but D'Eon was too deeply attached to his own country to entertain such a proposal; and resisting the offer, said that the renewal of friendly relations between the two countries, the advantages of which he had already pointed out, would afford him the opportunity for serving the interests of Russia without neglecting those of the Court of France; a reply which served to increase the esteem already entertained for him by Elizabeth.

<sup>1</sup> A tradition exists to the effect that Count Woronzoff's palace in the Sadovaya Oulitza, St. Petersburg, now occupied by the Corps des Pages, was constructed with English guineas. Later, in 1758, the count received a gratuity of fifty thousand roubles from Louis XV.

## CHAPTER II.

Sir Hanbury Williams and Count Woronzoff—The Empress Elizabeth's message to France—Chevalier Douglas, French Chargé d'Affaires in Russia with D'Eon as secretary—Commencement of the Seven Years' War—Count Apraxin's defection—D'Eon leaves for Versailles—Trait of character—Reception by Louis XV. and ministers—Proceeds to Russia—The will of Peter the Great—Count Bestoujeff's opinion of D'Eon—Prince Poniatovsky and his diamond—D'Eon as a fencer—Bestoujeff's arrest—D'Eon again invited to take service in Russia.

LEAVING Paris under the name of Léonard, for the second time as the King's secret envoy to Russia, but armed upon this occasion with private credentials from M. Rouillé, Minister for Foreign Affairs, and 'a great deal of money to dispose of,' Douglas passed through Dantzic, and Riga where he falsely represented himself as envoy extraordinary from France to Russia, and was accordingly received as such by the governor of that town. With equal disregard to the truth, he made it his business upon this journey to spread the report that in the treaty concluded between England and Prussia there was a secret article whereby the former Power was to pay to the latter an annual subsidy of 200,000*l.*! He arrived at St. Petersburg on April 22 (N.S.), requested an interview of the Vice-Chancellor at 9 P.M. for the same evening—obtained it—and forthwith delivered a letter from M. Rouillé, with friendly messages on the part of the King. Shortly afterwards he was presented at Court as a Scottish gentleman in the service of France, to the delight of Louis XV. and his ministers.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In acknowledging the receipt of despatches of May 12 and 18, brought

When questioned by Sir Hanbury Williams, the Vice-Chancellor admitted that Douglas was entrusted with a commission from the King of France, although not in an official capacity. He could give no information on the nature of that commission, but Sir Hanbury might rest assured that the Court of Russia would not enter into anything with France that could be prejudicial to the interests of England. It was not the first time, he said, that France had made overtures to Russia, but he was too well acquainted with the French nation ever to be their dupe, and he should not fail to give further information when in a position to do so. Within twenty-four hours of this conversation, the Chancellor Bestoujeff declared to Sir Hanbury that he was kept quite out of the secret, and knew nothing of Douglas' return until his arrival at Riga.<sup>1</sup>

When D'Eon again made his appearance at St. Petersburg, Douglas was simply delighted. 'I am very greatly pleased at the arrival of M. D'Eon,' he wrote to M. Rouillé; 'I have been long acquainted with his intelligence, his zeal, and attachment to his work. He will be very useful to me, and also of good service to the King. He is steady and prudent. . . .'<sup>2</sup>

Chancing to call one morning on Count Woronzoff, the British ambassador was not admitted. In the court-yard was Douglas' coach. The next day Woronzoff sent for Baron Wolff, to tell him the reason he had not received Sir Hanbury was because Douglas being with him, he did not know whether the English am-

to Paris by Michel the merchant, M. Rouillé warmly congratulates Douglas, in the name of the King, by letter dated June 18, on the distinction with which he had been received by the Ministers of Russia and even the Empress herself.—Copies of *French Correspondence*, Public Record Office.

<sup>1</sup> *Russia Correspondence*, Public Record Office.

<sup>2</sup> *Lett. Mém.* &c. iii. 6.

bassador would have liked to meet him. Sir Hanbury, who naturally looked upon Douglas as a rebel of the first water, since he was actually in the service of England's enemies, replied that if such was the message, the excuse was worse than the fault, for he refused to be put upon a level with such a fellow as Douglas.

The Treaty of Versailles (May 1, 1756) had placed Douglas and Count Esterhazy upon an entirely new footing. Their lengthened conferences, at first held secretly in a third place, and their growing intimacy, prevented Sir Hanbury from conversing any longer with the Austrian minister on matters of business. French subjects were invited to consider themselves under the protection of the Empress-Queen's ambassador, and Russia's ministers at foreign courts were instructed to live on good terms with those of France. Such were the political changes in progress, when Elizabeth openly professed her desire to renew diplomatic relations with the King of France.

M. Rouillé's courteous letter of February 9, presented to the Vice-Chancellor by Douglas upon the same evening of his arrival at St. Petersburg, and in which, by way of precaution, should the letter have miscarried, the secret envoy was spoken of as being a librarian, was as courteously answered under date of April 20 (O.S.). A long 'Mémoire,' also handed to Douglas for transmission to the French minister, in reply to the friendly advances made by Louis XV., and in which are expressed her Imperial Majesty's views on drawing closer together the improving relations between Russia and France, contains this passage:—

'It would be very agreeable to her Imperial Majesty if the Chevalier Douglas was more fully authorised or accredited as *Chargé d'Affaires*, so as to render it possible for both sides to

treat with greater authority on the other matters included in his instructions, and serve not only to the glory and to the mutual advantage of the two Courts, but also to their prompt reunion. Yet, notwithstanding the insufficiency of the Chevalier's authorisation, he will continue to be treated with distinction, and listened to with consideration, as being a person sent to this country on the part of his Most Christian Majesty.' <sup>1</sup>

In July, Douglas was accredited Chargé d'Affaires to the Court of Russia, taking up his residence at the Apraxin Palace, near the Summer Palace, D'Eon being appointed Secretary of Legation, and entrusted with the secret correspondence ; communicating with the Prince de Conti, and with the King through Tercier, and still the medium of intercourse between the Empress and Woronzoff on the one hand, and Louis XV. on the other ; by which arrangement Douglas was enabled to entertain uninterrupted relations with Elizabeth and Woronzoff on subjects of a nature to be kept concealed from Bestoujeff Riumin.

As the Treaty of Subsidies, an acknowledged fact between England and Russia, was set at naught by England's Neutrality Treaty with Prussia, so did Elizabeth cast the former to the winds, and in due course unite herself to the French-Austrian alliance, in spite of all that Catherine and Bestoujeff could do to prevent such a thing. Frederick's sarcasms had no more spared the Empress of Russia and the Empress-Queen than Madame de Pompadour, and the licentious Elizabeth thought it worth her while to retaliate by expressing her indignation at the King of Prussia's little concern in matters of religion. 'He does not believe in God ! He never goes to Church ! There is nothing

<sup>1</sup> Copies of *French Correspondence in Russia Correspondence*, Public Record Office.

that is sacred in his eyes !' Some years had passed since she uttered those words ; she had not forgiven him, now she was joining the coalition against that monarch, and so was about to begin what is known as the Seven Years' War.

The eighty thousand men for whom Sir Hanbury had bargained were assembled in Livonia under Count Apraxin,<sup>1</sup> the firm friend of Bestoujeff, when they shortly entered Poland. The war was commenced by the Austrians, the first to receive Frederick's fire and under Marshal Daun to defeat him at Kolin (June 18), afterwards marching upon Berlin and bearing away all the tribute money they could collect. Their German allies invaded Prussia from Saxony, the Swedes not long delaying in entering Pomerania, and the French attacking out of Hanover after having occupied Embden (July 3). Hearing that Apraxin had taken Memel, Frederick sent Field-Marshal Lewald with twenty-five thousand men to keep him in check, and a battle was fought at Gross-Jägersdorff near Königsberg (August 30), in which the Russians overpowered the enemy simply through force of numbers. Frederick being left with about twenty thousand men only, began to fear that all was lost, when the astounding intelligence reached him that the Russians, ' who were more easily killed than beaten,' were withdrawing towards their own frontier—a movement executed during the illness,

<sup>1</sup> Prince Tcheckbatoff says of Apraxin: The field-marshal was entirely devoid of military talents. Whilst awaiting orders at Riga he astonished the people by his display of wealth, and when moving with the army indulged in all the comforts and luxuries to be found only in a large city, and this in the midst of the sound of arms or in fatiguing marches. His tents extended over the space of a small town, five hundred horses being required to transport his baggage. Apraxin was a heavy, unwieldy man, fond of ladies' society. Apraxin is described by Sir Hanbury Williams as very corpulent, lazy, luxurious, and certainly not brave.

believed to be serious, of Elizabeth, who no sooner heard of Apraxin's strange doings, than she ordered him to be recalled and his conduct investigated. But the field-marshal did not long survive his return, and why he failed to follow up the advantages he had gained by the most complete of victories, was never explained by himself. Later, his reasons were guessed!

D'Eon had quitted St. Petersburg in April, entrusted by the Empress with private letters to Maria Theresa and Louis XV.; he was the bearer to the Courts of Vienna and Versailles of Elizabeth's friendly assurances that the Treaty of Subsidies with England was no longer of effect, and that the eighty thousand men she had assembled in Livonia and Courland should henceforth act in concert with the forces of Austria and France. He was also charged to deliver the ratification to the Treaty of Versailles, the plan to be pursued by the Russian army in its operations with the Austrian and French troops, and other papers of considerable importance relating to secret transactions in which he had borne a part; and, further, he was commissioned by Count Schouvaloff to take with him fifty thousand livres in gold, being a gift from the Empress to Voltaire, who had received her Majesty's commands to write the life of Peter—specie D'Eon lodged with the bankers Hermani and Dietrich, at Strasburg, on his way through that town.

In her letter to the King, Elizabeth referred to D'Eon in flattering terms as having been instrumental in conducting to the happy results which necessitated the journey he was about to take, and 'as a mark of her favour' she presented him with a gratuity of three hundred ducats.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> M. Wolkhoff to D'Eon, April  $\frac{15}{27}$ , 1757. *Lett. Mém. &c.* iii. 6. *Gazette d'Utrecht*, xlii. 1757.

When D'Eon first went to Russia, one commission entrusted to him was to obtain for the Prince de Conti, from the Empress, the command-in-chief of the Russian army and the principality of Courland; the secret aim of the prince being, through such means, to work his way gradually to the throne of Poland, and to that of Russia by marrying Elizabeth. Douglas and D'Eon had met with success on the two first points, which alone had been mooted to the Empress, and D'Eon's errand to Versailles included the Empress' and Woronzoff's assurances to the prince that he should have the command of the army and the principality of Courland, if the King would . . . .<sup>1</sup> The rest is obliterated by D'Eon in his letter.

One result of Douglas' and D'Eon's labours was the appointment of an ambassador to the Court of Russia in the person of the Marquis de l'Hôpital; but a whole year having elapsed between that minister's nomination and departure for his post, it so happened that when D'Eon got to Bieloyëstok on his way to Vienna, the two met, to the great advantage of the marquis, as he himself subsequently avowed; for he was supplied with so much useful practical information, upon a country of which he knew literally nothing, as a somewhat hurried interview would allow.

It was nightfall on the day that D'Eon got to the gates of Vienna, where a little incident occurred which serves to illustrate at least one trait in his character.

Although provided with passports that should have assured freedom from all kind of molestation or delay, the Customs' officers refused to allow him to enter the city without first searching his effects. Obstinate-

<sup>1</sup> D'Eon to the Count de Broglio, June 12, 1775: *Archives des affaires étrangères*. Gaill. 71.



objecting to submit to what he considered a gross indignity, but feeling himself under the circumstances to be the weakest, he made up his mind to pass the night outside the walls. A sergeant of hussars going his rounds offered the stranger a shelter in the guard-room. There being no French ambassador at Vienna, D'Eon sent, in the early morning, an account of his night's adventure to Baron de Toussaint, a favourite of the Emperor, which resulted in the dismissal of the two Customs' officers and the promotion of the sergeant to the rank of lieutenant.<sup>1</sup>

At Vienna D'Eon found the Count de Broglio, French minister to Poland, who had received orders to pass through that capital, and there concert such alterations as might be considered advisable in the plan prepared by Marshal D'Estrées for the ensuing campaign; a measure facilitated by D'Eon's timely appearance with the Russian plan of operations and his intimate knowledge of Russian affairs, which proved of invaluable service to the count. During his hurried stay at Vienna, news were received of the battle of Prague (May 6), 'the bloodiest battle of the age,' as Frederick called it, and de Broglio at once despatched him to carry the gratifying intelligence to Versailles. The hot haste in which he had travelled from St. Petersburg was not to be compared to the diligence he employed in bearing such additional good tidings; he managed to outstrip by thirty-six hours the special courier sent by Prince Kaunitz to Count Staremburg, Austrian ambassador at Paris, although he reached his destination with a broken leg, caused by the over-turning of the coach in his headlong journey; the accident and its cause only serving to intensify the interest already felt in the young

<sup>1</sup> *Lett. Mém. &c.* i. 48.

secretary, who was attended by the King's own surgeon immediately upon arrival.

D'Eon met with a most flattering reception by the Cardinal de Bernis, Foreign Minister, and Marshal de Belle-Isle, Minister of War, and a month or two later he received a handsome gold snuff-box, with portrait, from the King, inside which he found a gratuity from the privy purse, and, what he prized most, a commission as lieutenant of dragoons.

D'Eon's employment being still secret, and chiefly so in the King's service, as well as public in the quality of Secretary of Legation, he was bound to apply for permission to convey to the Prince de Conti the message entrusted to him at St. Petersburg. It was granted by the King.

*Louis XV. to Tercier.*

'July 20, 1757.

'Since M. D'Eon is commissioned by M. Woronzoff to see Prince de Conty, he must see him, but he is to give you an exact account of the Prince de Conty's reply. As this will some day become publicly known, I must be informed of it by other means than these. . . .'

'August 7, 1757.

' . . . The Sieur D'Eon must not communicate to anybody what he knows of the secret. . . .'<sup>1</sup>

D'Eon had several interviews and some secret correspondence with the Prince de Conti upon the success of his mission to St. Petersburg; but the Prince and Madame de Pompadour were no longer on good terms, she being too exacting to suit his pride, and the King would or could not make up his mind in favour of his kinsman.

*Louis XV. to Tercier.*

'Fontainebleau, September 15, 1757.

' . . . If the Empress of Russia really summons the Prince de Conty to the command of her armies, and desires to give him

<sup>1</sup> Boutaric, i. 222, 223.

Courland, until something better turns up, I shall be very glad; but for the present I can no longer take a direct part other than that of not offering any opposition, and give my consent when nothing else will be wanted. . . . I approve of your giving a cypher to the *Sieur D'Eon*, if he has not yet left. . . .'

'September 21, 1757.

' . . . When I am morally satisfied that the *Empress of Russia* destines him (the *Prince de Conti*) for the command of her army and for Courland, I will give all authority and permission required of me. Until then I am quite averse to it, for fear of taking a false step, which might do us more harm than good . . . '¹

D'Eon was anxious to take to Russia a decided answer of some sort, and when on his next journey he halted five days at Strasburg by desire of the Prince, who hoped to overtake him there with some favourable settlement of his case. But nothing came.

D'Eon never wasted his time. Whilst laid up under surgical treatment, enduring no little suffering from the resetting of a broken limb, he worked at collating a mass of useful information he had obtained in Russia from various sources, producing a valuable '*Mémoire*,' upon which he was complimented by King and ministers. In this '*Mémoire*,' Gaillardet includes a document which has been the subject-matter of frequent controversy, its authenticity being discredited and derided—the will of Peter the Great; but he negligently omits to state where he consulted the copy of the will in D'Eon's own hand, and as we have been unable to verify the existence of such a copy we forbear reproducing it, because otherwise it has no place here, and leave the task to some one more favoured than we could expect to be, in searching amongst the French archives.

¹ Poutaric, i. 86, 224. Vandal, 307.

In a monograph which appeared at Brussels in 1863,<sup>1</sup> the author fathers the will of Peter the Great on Napoleon I., and ascribes the earliest publication of it to Lesur in his 'Des Progrès de la puissance Russe, depuis son origine jusqu'au commencement du XIX<sup>me</sup> siècle,' printed in 1812 under the immediate superintendence of the French Government, at the time that the Emperor was preparing for the invasion of Russia. In this pamphlet Gaillardet (in whose fanciful story of the Chevalier D'Eon, edition of 1836, the author read the will) is charged with having reproduced the will from the pages of Lesur.

On receiving his commission in the army D'Eon applied for active service, having grown tired and become disgusted with the intrigues of a life at Court, and the sight of troops in Courland, Prussia, Silesia, and Moravia, when upon his journey from Russia, having 'only served to inspire him with martial ardour.' But he was too precious and too useful in Russia to be allowed to have his own way. The Marquis de l'Hôpital was pressing him to return to St. Petersburg. 'My dear little fellow, I have learnt with pain of your accident, and with great pleasure of your interviews with the Old and New Testaments.<sup>2</sup> Come, live out the Gospel with us, and rely upon my friendship and esteem.' To which Douglas added: 'I also embrace you, my dear cripple, and hope you will have left before the arrival of this letter to join your worthy protector, who will be a father to you.' Over and above all, the King's ministers expressed the wish that D'Eon should return to Russia with the least possible delay to perform a

<sup>1</sup> *Napoléon I. auteur du testament de Pierre le Grand*: par G. Berkholtz. (Bruxelles, à l'Office de Publicité, 1863.)

<sup>2</sup> Terms not understood.

particular piece of service, for which he was specially qualified.

It so happened that D'Eon had discovered the existence of a secret correspondence between the grand-duke, assisted by Bestoujeff, and the King of Prussia, whose interests they preferred to serve, Apraxin and Todleben, the Empress's two generals in command of her army on the field; the design being to keep the Russian troops in a state of inaction, and thus deprive the newly-allied Courts of the advantages to be derived from the treaties so happily brought about by Douglas and himself. D'Eon alone seemed to have knowledge of this surreptitious intercourse, and being required to bring it to light it was manifest that he should return to Russia.

*Cardinal de Bernis to the Marquis de l'Hôpital.*

‘Compiègne, July 24, 1757.

‘Sir,—The King has been pleased to take into favourable consideration your request that M. D'Eon de Beaumont should serve under your orders as First Secretary to your Embassy, and his Majesty has the more willingly resolved upon so doing, as the knowledge acquired by M. D'Eon on the government and administration of Russia, gives just grounds for assuming that he will be of great use to you and to the King's service. . . .’<sup>1</sup>

In September D'Eon left Paris, again as the sole confidential correspondent of Louis XV. He was supplied with copies of the instructions sent to the French ambassador at St. Petersburg and of those from Prince Kaunitz to Count Esterhazy, and he was ordered to concert measures with Count Woronzoff for disclosing to the Empress the Grand Chancellor's treachery. He also took with him a letter to Woronzoff, in which Tercier

<sup>1</sup> *Lett. Mém. &c.* iii. 9.

repeated the King's desire to entertain a secret correspondence with the Empress.<sup>1</sup> Douglas was at the same time on his way to Versailles, having been recalled at the request of Bestoujeff, who was informed by the French ambassador that the recall was an accomplished fact, done as a favour to him.<sup>2</sup>

*Cardinal de Bernis to the Marquis de l'Hôpital.*

'Fontainebleau, September 13, 1757.

'I send to you, my dear ambassador, our dear little D'Eon, with whom I hope you will be pleased. He is most intelligent, zealous, and of a highly amiable disposition. His fortune<sup>3</sup> lies in his hands as it does in yours. If you are as satisfied with his conduct and diligence as I hope and wish you may be, he may depend upon my being careful to, &c. . . .'<sup>4</sup>

The announcement of D'Eon's approaching arrival was received with ill-concealed concern by the Grand Chancellor, who suggested to the Marquis de l'Hôpital the desirability of this appointment being cancelled. He represented D'Eon to be a dangerous person whom they would not cease to mistrust, for they believed him capable of overturning the empire; an unguarded speech, producing a result contrary to what was desired by Bestoujeff, for de l'Hôpital only called the more loudly for his new secretary, whose presence was feared by the Prussian party.<sup>5</sup>

D'Eon was now in Russia for the third time.

<sup>1</sup> Vandal, 327.

<sup>2</sup> *Russia Correspondence*, Public Record Office.

<sup>3</sup> This is the fifth or sixth minister who is anxious to make my fortune. Fortune, however, unhappily wears a wig, and is continually slipping away from my grasp. The next time we meet I shall seize her by the hair.—Note by D'Eon.

<sup>4</sup> *Lett. Mém.* &c. iii. 11.

<sup>5</sup> De la Fortelle, 33.

Meeting the English ambassador at dinner one evening, the conversation turned upon the trial and execution of Admiral Byng. D'Eon observed that for his part he was very sorry for the admiral. 'Why?' inquired the ambassador. 'Because,' replied D'Eon, 'he was a great friend to France: he never did her any harm!'

Invited upon another occasion to join in an English dance, D'Eon said that his business at St Petersburg was not to dance English dances, but to make the English jump!'<sup>1</sup>

D'Eon relates an incident that occurred in November, shortly after his arrival at St. Petersburg. Prince Poniatovsky, envoy extraordinary from Poland, wrote to ask him for certain information on events then passing, his letter being accompanied by a diamond of the value of eight thousand livres. As a matter of course D'Eon handed over the letter and the bribe to the ambassador, by whom the gem was immediately returned to the Polish minister, who got into such a passion that he threw it into the fire. De l'Hôpital reported the circumstance to the Cardinal de Bernis, and the King's promise was made that such an act of fidelity should be rewarded by the presentation to the secretary of a sum of equal value to the diamond; but Bernis' disgrace and exile caused the matter to be forgotten.<sup>2</sup>

D'Eon was well known to Poniatovsky, who did not forget him in after years, his proficiency in the art of fencing being one of the accomplishments that rendered him a favourite with those at Court, and he frequently dined with the grand-duke, with Prince Charles (for a time Duke of Courland), or with Poniatovsky, the evenings being spent in fencing. If pressure of work

<sup>1</sup> Note-book, dated 1754: Ch, MSS.

<sup>2</sup> Loménie, i. 414.

prevented him from accepting the invitations he received, the French ambassador was scolded by those personages for having detained him at the Embassy.<sup>1</sup>

On February 24, 1758, the Grand Chancellor, Bestoujeff Riumin, was arrested by order of Elizabeth, whilst presiding at a council of ministers. Amidst his papers, which were all seized, was found a scheme for disposing of certain persons obnoxious to him, amongst whom were included Douglas and D'Eon.<sup>2</sup> He was charged with high treason, the French and Austrian ambassadors being loud in their condemnation of his criminal purposes. At the same time were arrested several other persons having constant access to the Grand-Duchess Catherine, such, for instance, as her secretary, her tutor in the Russian language, jeweller, &c., and she herself became the object of so great obloquy that she demanded permission to withdraw to Germany, a step the Empress refused to sanction.

The conjectures formed to account for Bestoujeff's perfidy were various, but it was generally accepted that Elizabeth, having been seriously indisposed and her death apprehended, the Grand Chancellor was anxious to secure Catherine's favour by withholding the Russian forces from taking part in further hostilities against Frederick. He also aimed at securing the succession of her child to the exclusion of the grand-duke, his father, with the nomination of herself to the regency, or even

<sup>1</sup> Ch. MSS. In his *Mémoires Secrets*, &c. (London, 1781), Petit de Bachaumont states that D'Eon was sent as fencing-master to the Grand-Duke Peter, who had wished for one; a piece of information he obtained in all probability from the Count de Guerchy, who told George III. a similar story. He adds that D'Eon was at the same time entrusted to arrange with the grand-duke for the reception of a French ambassador at St. Petersburg; as manifest an absurdity, there being at the Russian Court no person more hostile to French interests than Peter.

<sup>2</sup> La Messalière, 77.



her own elevation to the throne. This view of the case received confirmation in after years, for Bestoujeff was never permitted to return from exile until the accession of Catherine.

When under arrest, Bestoujeff was treated with unusual consideration, notwithstanding the general feeling against him from his known intimacy with Apraxin, the cause of so much national disgrace. He was detained for a time a prisoner in his own house, escaping the tortures to which others, equally compromised with himself, had been subjected; and, although designated 'a traitor grown old in iniquity,' it was decreed in the imperial manifesto ordering his trial, that 'no severity was to be employed for the purpose of exacting his evidence or confession; but whatever he chose to say was to be noted.'

Bestoujeff was exiled to one of his estates, and Woronzoff succeeded him as Grand Chancellor.

After the Bestoujeff affair, the Empress renewed her efforts—this time through his superiors—to induce D'Eon to enter her service.

*The Marquis de l'Hôpital to the Cardinal de Bernis.*

'St. Petersburg, June 29, 1758.

'... I have proposed to M. D'Eon, in compliance with your wishes, again to attach him to the Court of Russia; but he says that he will not serve other master than the King for all the gold in the world; that he is sensible of his obligations towards you, and that he is too respectfully devoted to you to think of seeking elsewhere the rewards you will bestow upon him for serving under your orders and to your satisfaction as he is now doing.

*The Cardinal's Reply.*

'Versailles, August 1, 1758.

'I cannot do otherwise than approve the motives which induce M. D'Eon to refuse employment offered to him by the

Court of Russia. They are the results of his zeal to the King's service, and of his attachment towards yourself. . . .'<sup>1</sup>

*M. D'Eon to M. Tercier.*

'I have given the Marquis de l'Hôpital to understand all my reasons, and this without any difficulty. I am satisfied, considering his friendship towards me, that he would be sorry were I to leave him, and in forfeiting his friendship I should gain his secret contempt. I have therefore declared to him, not on political grounds, but with all the candour and truth of which a Burgundian is capable, that I will never leave the service of France for that of all the emperors and empresses in the universe, and that no motives can cause me to change my way of thinking—neither honours nor riches. I tell you what I think. I prefer to live from hand to mouth in France to being in the enjoyment of an income of one hundred thousand livres in fear and bondage. *Regnare nolo, dum liber non sum mihi.* This is the profession of my faith. I am satisfied that neither the Abbé de Bernis nor you will take my way of thinking amiss. Had I a bastard brother, be assured I should prevail upon him to accept such an offer, but for myself, who am legitimate, I am glad to die like a faithful dog in a ditch in my native land.'<sup>2</sup>

*M. D'Eon to the Cardinal de Bernis.*

' . . . Whilst having the honour of thanking you for your good intentions, and the prospects you have in view in my behalf, I entreat you at once to do me the favour to dismiss me from your memory whenever there is a question of my destiny removing me entirely from France. Since I came to St. Petersburg, my maxim has ever been to keep my back turned upon Siberia, too happy to have escaped being sent there. I long for and look towards my native country. . . .'

*The Cardinal de Bernis to M. D'Eon.*

' Versailles, August 1, 1758.

' . . . You will be informed by the Marquis de l'Hôpital that, far from being distressed at your refusal to accept the post

<sup>1</sup> *Lett. Mém. &c.* iii. 14.

<sup>2</sup> Gaill. 74.

offered to you at the Court of Russia, the motives which induce you not to accept it meet with entire approbation. Continue to serve his Majesty with the same zeal you have hitherto displayed. It will at all times be a pleasure to me to bring to the favourable notice of the King your services, your labours, and your abilities.' <sup>1</sup>

It was not at the hands of the Empress of Russia that D'Eon cared to receive honours. For his important services at the Court of that monarch he was promoted by Louis XV. to the rank of captain of dragoons, and awarded a pension of two hundred ducats, to be paid by the Count de Broglio out of the secret service money.

In the course of this year D'Eon found time to publish a work, in two volumes, entitled '*Confédérations Historiques sur les Impôts des Egyptiens, des Babylo niens, des Perses, des Grecs, des Romains, et sur les différentes situations de la France, par rapport aux Finances, depuis l'établissement des Francs dans la Gaule jusqu'à présent.*' <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Lett. Mém. &c.* iii. 15.

<sup>2</sup> An English version of portions of this work appeared in the *Political Register* for 1766, &c.

## CHAPTER III.

Progress of the war—The Duke de Choiseul's designs against England—Change of policy—D'Eon's advice to the French ambassador—Approved by Louis XV.—D'Eon's failing health—The Marquis de l'Hôpital—Baron de Breteuil admitted to the secret correspondence—The King's secret orders to D'Eon—Testimonies to his abilities—Leaves Russia for the last time—Gift from the Empress—On the staff of the Marshal and Count de Broglio—Distinguished services during the campaign of 1761—Exile of the Broglies—Death of Elizabeth.

APRAXIN's defection was a fine thing for Frederick. Two great events followed—the humiliating defeat of the French at Rosbach (October 31), by Seidlitz and his cavalry, shall we say? and the battle of Leuthen (December 5), in which eighty thousand Austrians were worsted by thirty thousand Prussians. And thus ended the campaign of 1757. The following year Field-Marshal Fermor, Apraxin's successor, entered Eastern Prussia, occupied Königsberg, and was beaten by Frederick at Zorndorff (August 25, 1758). Prince Soltikoff, who replaced Fermor, was also about to lose a battle at Künersdorff (August 12, 1759); but the day ended happily for him, his ninety thousand men having almost annihilated the forty-eight thousand Prussians by whom he was opposed.

This much of what the Russians did, and we shall have got to the end of 1759, after an illustration, from concurrent testimony, of D'Eon's share in the progress of the war.

Let us first turn to the pages of Vandal.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Vandal, 348 *et seq.*

On December 30, 1758, was signed by Louis XV. and Maria Theresa a treaty in confirmation of their previous treaty still in force, except that it determined with greater precision respective obligations; France, for instance, binding herself to keep an army of 100,000 men in Germany. Elizabeth was invited to join, and she did so. Of this matter the Duke de Choiseul, for some months Minister for Foreign Affairs, was completely ignorant. There was a time, it was but short, when the duke in his patriotic desire to recover influences lost to France through the feeble administration of the Cardinal de Bernis, his predecessor, had determined upon not entertaining any idea of capitulating with England, so long as soldiers, guns and ships remained, and on prosecuting the war against Prussia until France met with success. A partisan of Austria, his feelings towards Russia were of a different nature, but he was wisely inclined to turn to the best account the alliance with those Powers. As regards Russia, he instructed the ambassador at St. Petersburg (January 9, 1759) to tell Woronzoff, for the information of the Empress, that if the King were to desire peace for the happiness of his people and the repose of Europe, it should only be on conditions honourable to his Majesty and his allies, and which would ensure general tranquillity; but that so far from contemplating such a thing, every arrangement was made for effectively continuing the war during the present and a succeeding campaign, to the end of bringing the enemy to just and reasonable terms. That the Empress might have undoubted proofs of his Majesty's sentiments on the subject, and to do away with every possible misunderstanding, the King was disposed to conclude, jointly with the two Empresses, or with the Empress of Russia

alone, such convention as might be considered necessary for strengthening their union, thereby giving fresh assurances that his Majesty would only act in concert with his allies, communicating with them on all points with that entire confidence which should exist between Powers bound by friendly ties, and whose interests were in common.

Unable to cope with Great Britain on the seas, the Duke de Choiseul formed a plan of invasion, in which he sought the co-operation of Russia and Sweden, whose spheres of action would be the Scottish coast. 'Should fifty thousand men perish in the first expedition,' he wrote to Count Bernstorff, 'the King has signed the determination to send other fifty thousand, and we shall not be discouraged so long as we have men in France.'<sup>1</sup> The hesitations of those Powers, the destruction of the French fleets in the East Indies, off Cape Lagos, and in Quiberon Bay, and of the flotilla prepared for the invasion of England, upset the whole of the duke's schemes, and gave him good cause to change his tactics. He would now hail peace if he could. He turned to de l'Hôpital (July 8, 1759), and desired him to seize an early opportunity for feeling his way with the Grand Chancellor, and suggesting to that minister, as a private opinion of his own, the desirability of Russia's mediation between Austria and Prussia, whereby she would secure to herself the gratitude of Europe. De Choiseul believed that if the Germanic Powers could but arrange their differences, Russia might become useful in bringing about an understanding between France and England.

<sup>1</sup> Duke de Choiseul to Count Bernstorff, July 29, 1759. 'Si j'étais maître,' de Choiseul used to say, 'nous serions vis-à-vis de l'Angleterre comme l'Espagne vis-à-vis des Maures; si l'on prenait ce parti, l'Angleterre serait détruite d'ici à trente ans.' Louis XV. thought differently.

De l'Hôpital—gouty, good-natured, and easy-going—had made it a practice never to act without first consulting his confidential secretary. That secretary, at the present time, was D'Eon, who recommended that no notice whatever should be taken of the minister's letter. De l'Hôpital agreed. At the expiration of a couple of months de Choiseul again wrote, this time impatiently and reproachfully.

'Allow me to tell you, my dear Marquis, that you amuse yourself somewhat too much at playing the ambassador, and that you do not sufficiently attend to its responsibilities. My despatch, No. 48, will have given you some idea of the King's system, which, however, you have not as yet turned to profit. Apparently, you have not been able to do so, but you should have informed me whether you understand, and how you understand his Majesty's instructions upon a project as delicate as it is advantageous. Reflect seriously upon it; I speak to you as a friend, I unfold to you our system, and if you are not so thoroughly satisfied with it as we are, you are too good a servant to the King not to say so; and in such a case, since you do not wish to change your ideas, t'were far better that you should, under pretext of illness, give up your Embassy rather than be employed in a task, of the advantages of which you are not persuaded. This avowal on your part would, I assure you, please the King as much as your success, for which we hope, in the negotiations. The Marchioness de l'Hôpital has spoken to me of your desire to be created a duke; I wish with all my heart I could serve you. Enable yourself to solicit this favour by the obligations under which the King will be to you. I tell you simply this: there are but two ways; either to carry out the views contained in the despatch No. 48, and in this private letter, or come away. I prefer the first to the last, but the last will also succeed if you promptly give up the first, for I shall certainly represent that you cannot return without receiving some special reward.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Private, from the Duke de Choiseul to the Marquis de l'Hôpital, October 2, 1759. Vandal, 360.

We will let D'Eon lift the veil of Louis XV.'s diplomacy in his own words :—

‘In 1759, the Duke de Choiseul had prevailed upon the Empress of Russia, by means of negotiations through the Marquis de l'Hôpital, to offer her mediation towards securing peace, when I at the same time received the King's orders to use my best efforts with the Empress, and the Grand Chancellor Woronzoff, to prevail upon her Majesty to withdraw her mediation, and to exhort her to continue the war, without allowing the Duke de Choiseul or the Marquis de l'Hôpital to know what I was about—all of which I executed to the great satisfaction of the King, as I can prove by evidence bearing his signature ; and for these incontestable facts I appeal to the reliable testimony of the Count de Broglio.’<sup>1</sup> ‘. . . It was I, who, by secret orders from my master, unknown to the great Choiseul, caused the late war to last three years longer.’<sup>2</sup>

Turning again to Vandal, we find the King's approval of D'Eon's counsel to de l'Hôpital, and verification of the former's statement in the paragraph above quoted.

‘No reference is here made, either to the instructions sent to the Marquis de l'Hôpital, directing him to enter upon negotiations for terminating the German war, by means of, and by the mediation of the Empress of Russia, or to what has prevented them. The inconvenience which might have resulted from the influence and dangerous preponderance which Russia would in this way have acquired, and the real advantages she would have procured for herself, are too well known to be repeated here. It is, therefore, a matter for congratulation, so far as the interests of the King are concerned, that the Marquis de l'Hôpital, yielding in this instance to the prudent advice of the Sieur D'Eon, had allowed the opportunity to slip, which he had been eagerly enjoined to seize.’<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> D'Eon to Louis XVI. : Ch. MSS. 861.

<sup>2</sup> D'Eon to Beaumarchais, January 7, 1776. Gaill. 406.

<sup>3</sup> Secret instructions to the Baron de Breteuil, April 1, 1760. *Affaires étrangères*, Vandal, 373.



Four years of anxious and hard toil in a climate which did not suit him had told on D'Eon's health, until he felt seriously inconvenienced from scurvy and an affection of the eyes, and his return to France became but a question of time. He was longing for home. Apart from his dislike to life at Court, where he felt that 'it was impossible for a simply virtuous, non-intriguing and dispassionate man to succeed,' he had made up his mind that Russia was not a country for a freeman to live in. He could not forget that he and five other officers attached to the Embassy had to lay aside their uniforms, to avoid the insults offered by soldiers and people of the lower class, at times when France was meeting with reverses, such as those at Rosbach and Minden; and the mortification he endured at hearing the Empress' words of comfort to his chief, the French ambassador. It was reported that D'Eon had determined upon not remaining in Russia because he had seen the daughter of Pope Urban X. (*sic*), who was married to the gardener of a boyar, receive twenty blows with a stick for several days consecutively; and because the said boyar and thirty other boyars were broken on the wheel, two years afterwards, for their share in some Court broil. He mentions this report of himself without adding any comment, but relates an anecdote which clearly confirms his unfavourable opinion of the country he was in. A Russian nobleman said to him one fine summer's day :—

'Sir, all Europe is exasperated against us; but look around, where you will, and you see beautiful fertile plains teeming with corn and game.' 'Prince,' replied D'Eon, 'I see a crow yonder on the plain, and I regret that I have not my gun with me. I would shoot it off-hand, because, having wings, it remains in a

country of slavery, instead of making use of them and flying away into Poland, a land of liberty !'<sup>1</sup>

D'Eon applied for permission to resign on the score of ill-health, and to be allowed to join his regiment, but his departure was necessarily postponed until a suitable successor could be found. For his own part de Choiseul became convinced that de l'Hôpital was no longer fitted for the post of ambassador at St. Petersburg, an opinion shared by the King for quite different reasons, which need not be entered into here. De l'Hôpital, however, was an old and faithful servant to the Crown and deserving of every consideration, so that it was felt to be impossible to recall him abruptly, and such a step was likely to give offence to the Empress, who had taken a fancy to him, and received him at her Court with favour and distinction. As a solution of the difficulty, de Choiseul conceived the idea of appointing a colleague to the marquis with subordinate rank, who should eventually succeed him on his resignation, which, considering his age and increasing infirmities, could not long be delayed. This colleague should be a personal friend of his own, to whom he might confide and entrust his policy and intentions, and he nominated the Baron de Breteuil, a young man of twenty-seven, of distinguished appearance and refined manners. The Count de Broglio, however, also had his candidate, M. Durand, a gentleman attached to the Embassy at Warsaw, the King's secret agent in that capital, initiated in the system, well conversant in Russian affairs, and therefore eminently qualified to serve the King's private interests at the Court of Russia in the room of D'Eon. This nomination the duke resolutely refused to entertain. He had undeniably

<sup>1</sup> Ch. MSS.

good cause to suspect the existence of some occult influence to his disadvantage, having already found himself thwarted in his plans, in various quarters, without being able to trace the obstruction to its source, and had determined upon carrying his point, which he completely succeeded in doing, by prevailing upon the King to sign the Baron de Breteuil's credentials as minister plenipotentiary. No sooner had the minister's choice become an irrevocable fact, than the Count de Broglio and Tercier urged upon the King the expediency of admitting the baron to the secret correspondence, and informing him that he should best be pleasing his master by not carrying out the orders of the minister. The King had great objection to the admission of new disciples, but there appeared to be no alternative, and after a little hesitation his Majesty yielded to the recommendations of his advisers.<sup>1</sup>

*Louis XV. to the Baron de Breteuil.*

'February 26, 1760.

'Monsieur le Baron de Breteuil,—In consideration of the favourable reports I have received with reference to yourself, I have decided upon nominating you my minister plenipotentiary in Russia, and admitting you to a secret correspondence with me, which I have never wished to conduct through my Minister for Foreign Affairs. The Count de Broglio, who will deliver to you this letter, and M. Tercier, are alone concerned in the management, and you will accept whatever they may say to you as coming from me. You will deliver to them the instructions you have already received, and which you will yet receive from the Duke de Choiseul before your departure, and you will communicate to them any verbal instructions you may have received from him, upon the subject of your mission, so that being acquainted thereupon, they may prepare special and secret instructions, from their knowledge of my wishes, on the affairs

<sup>1</sup> Vandal, 265 *et seq.*

of Russia and Poland. Those instructions will be supplied to you with all despatch, so soon as I shall have approved them.

‘In the meantime, I order you to postpone your departure until you receive them, under any pretext convenient to yourself, and I charge you, at your peril, to keep this secret from everybody, no matter who, with the exception of the Count de Broglio and M. Tercier, and I rely upon your fidelity and your obedience.<sup>1</sup>

LOUIS.’

*Louis XV. to M. D'Eon.*

‘Sieur D'Eon,—Reasons of a private nature, in addition to my confidence in the abilities of the Baron de Breteuil and in his zeal for my service, have induced me to make known to him the direct correspondence I hold with Russia, unknown to my Minister for Foreign Affairs, and to my ambassador. He is also informed of your having been admitted to this secret, for the purpose of facilitating the correspondence, as well as for communicating to me, directly, such particulars as you may consider it necessary to lay before me. The exactitude with which you have acquitted yourself of this duty, so far as your position and the distances that divide places have enabled you, satisfies me that you will afford me fresh proofs of your zeal during the stay of the Baron de Breteuil at the Court of Petersburg. I have given him to understand it is my intention that you should serve under his orders as secretary, for the sole purpose of carrying on the secret correspondence. You will receive a salary of three thousand livres from the Minister for Foreign Affairs, to which I will add two hundred ducats annually, as a mark of my satisfaction at the manner in which you have served me, and because I rely upon your continuing to do so. You will communicate to the Baron de Breteuil, with the greatest exactitude of which you are capable, laying aside partiality and prejudice, all the ideas you have formed on the character of the Empress of Russia, of her ministers, and of those who are employed in public affairs. You will also communicate your views on the conduct pursued from the commencement of the war to the present time, and what you believe might have been done to ensure success to the common cause, and what it is that

<sup>1</sup> Flasan, vi. 289.

has retarded it. You will write out the whole of this in a memorandum which you will give him, sending to me a copy, in cypher, by the earliest safe opportunity ; in fact, you will communicate to him everything that you may consider of benefit to my service, whether as regards the past or the future. You will, however, await the information he will give you upon the subject of his secret instructions, that you may supply yourself with a copy, and take into consideration the best means to be adopted for their being carried out successfully. They will serve as your guide in all you will say, whether as regards what has been done or what is to be done.

‘This, my mark of confidence in the Baron de Breteuil, is a proof of how fully I am persuaded that he will execute my orders with zeal and ability. Notwithstanding the sincerity of his intentions, which I do not doubt, it is just possible that he may err as to the means to be adopted for giving effect to my secret instructions ; you will in such a case expose to him, deferentially, your views.’<sup>1</sup>

‘In the King’s hand. Approved 7th March, 1760.’

On August 23, 1760, de l’Hôpital informed the Minister for Foreign Affairs that M. Poissonnier,<sup>2</sup> the Empress’s private physician, had recommended D’Eon’s instant departure from Russia, his ailments threatening serious consequences.

‘I have already had the honour of acquainting you with M. D’Eon’s services and abilities. I entreat that you will be good enough to recommend him to the favourable notice of the King, and ask his Majesty to reward his services and zeal by granting him a pension equal to the whole or part of the annual salary he has enjoyed since he has been with me.’

In a private communication to the same minister, de l’Hôpital reminded the duke that D’Eon’s services in

<sup>1</sup> Flassan, vi. 190.

<sup>2</sup> A distinguished physician at the French Court, sent by Louis XV. to attend upon the Empress, who had complained to the King of her physical sufferings.

foreign affairs were well known; he had not a little contributed to a renewal of the alliance with Russia, and had exerted himself with zeal equal to his activity and intelligence. Such men were deserving of the protection of ministers such as he was, and of the favours he had a right to expect. . . . The state of poor D'Eon's health was unsatisfactory, and his private affairs were in a bad condition; and yet his family had long and usefully served the King and State.<sup>1</sup>

'I cannot write in too high terms of his merits, his industry, and integrity,' said de l'Hôpital in a letter to the Minister for War; 'he seems bent on following a military career. . . . He is anxious to serve in a regiment of foot by purchase of a captain's commission. . . . You must remember that in 1757 he brought to you a treaty and the news of the battle of Prague, with a broken leg, and diligence that astonished you. . . . I will answer for it that M. D'Eon will never disgrace his supporters. . . .'

The old marquis followed up these strong recommendations of his young friend with a graceful tribute to his mother at Tonnerre.

'Madame,—I send back to you a son worthy of all your tenderness; I feel that I should give him back to you, so that we may preserve him for the King's service, for yourself, and for me. . . . I could not part with your son without giving you a proof of my sincere friendship and esteem for him. . . .'

*The Baron de Breteuil to the Duke de Choiseul.*

'St. Petersburg, August 2, 1760.

' . . . This secretary was sent here secretly by M. Rouillé, together with the Chevalier Douglas, at the commencement of the negotiations with this Court. M. de l'Hôpital is greatly concerned. I have known him only since my arrival here, but

<sup>1</sup> *Lett. Mém. &c.* iii. 17.

he appears to me to be steady, clever, and talented, and one who has applied himself with advantage to political affairs, and to special acquaintance with this country. . . . He has gained the esteem and friendship of a great many persons at this Court.'<sup>1</sup>

Previous to quitting the capital, D'Eon went to Peterhof to take leave of the Empress, who required he should promise to return to Russia so soon as he had recovered his health. In parting from Woronzoff, the colleague with whose aid he had accomplished so much, the Grand Chancellor said :—

'I am sorry you are going away, even though your first trip here, with Douglas, cost my Sovereign more than two hundred thousand men and fifteen million roubles.' 'I agree,' replied D'Eon, 'but your Excellency should at the same time admit, that your Sovereign and your Excellency yourself have thereby acquired fame and glory that will last as long as the world.'<sup>2</sup>

D'Eon carried away with him a souvenir from the Empress, consisting of a snuff-box with her cipher in diamonds.

Sick and faint, D'Eon left St. Petersburg for the third and last time in August 1760, taking with him the ratifications to the Treaty of December 30, 1758, and the ratifications to the Maritime Convention concluded between Russia, Sweden, and Denmark. Travelling through Finland, Livonia, Courland, Poland, and Hungary, as fast as horses could carry him, he

<sup>1</sup> *Lett. Mém.* &c. iii. 19–20.

<sup>2</sup> De la Fortelle, 40. Writing under the persuasion that D'Eon was of the female sex, Flassan, vi. 110, says :—'Woronzoff and D'Eon were the intermediaries in the correspondence between Louis XV. and Elizabeth.' Capefigue, *Louis XV. et la Société du XVIII<sup>me</sup> Siècle*, Paris, 1842, says, iv. 32 : 'By means of his renown, D'Eon was enabled to accomplish the most delicate and most difficult missions . . . his correspondence with Louis XV. is eminently remarkable . . . he was chiefly instrumental in arranging the treaty of alliance between France and Russia.'

reached Vienna completely exhausted and scarcely able to move. His friend, the Count de Choiseul,<sup>1</sup> received him in comfortable quarters and supplied all his wants ; but he was restless and impatient to complete his journey, which he did in equally imprudent haste. Sickening of small-pox at Paris, a long illness and convalescence entirely unfitted him during several months for any kind of employment.

Upon his recovery, D'Eon was received by the King, who was pleased to confer upon him a life pension of two thousand livres, under warrant dated December 24, 1760, 'in acknowledgment of his zeal and ability as secretary of Embassy in Russia, a post he has held for several years,'<sup>2</sup> and by the following February he was well enough to be able to realise his dearest and long-deferred wish, that of active service on the field. He requested the Minister for War to transfer him from his own regiment, the dragoons of the Colonel-General, doing duty on the coasts of France, to the regiment of dragoons of the Marquis d'Autichamp, in the army on the Upper Rhine, and applied for permission to serve as aide-de-camp to the Marshal and the Count de Broglio, with both of which solicitations the Minister readily complied, the King specially approving of D'Eon's being on the staff of those officers, remarking that they should know where to find him if he were wanted.<sup>3</sup> This appointment was a great compliment, for the marshal was intractable in the selection of officers to serve on his staff, and most punctilious in surrounding himself with scions of the noblest families.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> French ambassador at Vienna, afterwards created Duke de Praslin.

<sup>2</sup> *Lett. Mém.* &c. iii. 24.

<sup>3</sup> Louis XV. to the Count de Broglio, May 31, 1761. Boutaric, i. 265.

<sup>4</sup> De Broglio, i. 384.



We first hear of D'Eon after joining the army as having been present at the battle of Villinghausen,<sup>1</sup> then with the French force that crossed the Weser on August 19. He was under orders that day to remove the powder waggons to a place of safety on the opposite side of the river, and this under the heavy fire of the enemy—'a perilous operation,' as allowed by the Duke de Broglie; and being across he was to find the Count de Guerchy, and deliver to that officer a written order from the marshal.

'The Marshal requests the Count de Guerchy to cause the immediate distribution by the storekeeper, amongst the brigades of infantry on the right bank of the Weser, of four hundred thousand cartridges, deposited in a place that M. D'Eon, the bearer of this note, will point out.

'Done at Höxter, August 19, 1761.

'THE COUNT DE BROGLIO.'

'P.S.—It is desirable that a staff officer should at once accompany M. D'Eon to effect this distribution to the troops under your orders.'<sup>2</sup>

Had de Guerchy promptly carried out the marshal's instructions the ammunition would have been instantly removed, the enemy's fire would have ceased, and the lives of one officer and several grenadiers, occupying a redoubt which covered the two bridges of boats on the Weser, to the right and left of Höxter, would have been spared. But upon reading the note the general preferred to gallop out of the way, shouting, as he went: 'If you have a supply of ammunition, you have only to remove it to a park of artillery you will find at half a league's distance.' D'Eon gave spur after him, saying,

<sup>1</sup> See *Scots Mag.* vol. xxiii. for Marshal de Broglie's account of this action.

<sup>2</sup> *Lett. Mém. &c.* i. 145.

that since he did not wish to, or was unable to execute the marshal's order, he might return it, and he should do his best to execute it or cause it to be executed. 'Take the order, sir,' said de Guerchy, returning the note, 'and carry it out according to your own judgment.' The enemy's fire being largely directed to where the powder waggons had been removed, and there being no time to lose, D'Eon took it upon himself to distribute the cartridges, with the assistance of several officers of artillery who had volunteered their services.<sup>1</sup>

D'Eon was next engaged in a reconnaissance and action at Ultrop, where he was wounded in the head and thigh; and later (November 7), when at the head of the grenadiers of Champagne and of a body of Swiss, he dislodged the Scottish highlanders in the gorge of the mountain at Einbeck, near Meintos, and pursued them to the English camp; a service he performed with the greatest difficulty, owing to the tenacity of the enemy in keeping up a rapid fire. In the latter engagement he carried the following despatch:—

*The Count de Broglie to the Marshal de Broglie.*

'On nearing the village of Eime, I found the Marquis de Lostanges watching the advanced posts of the enemy, which he took to be their rear-guard, with the cavalry, carabineers, and other troops he had with him during the night. I united him with M. Despies and the six battalions of grenadiers. We agreed upon the plan for attacking this pretended rear-guard, and drove it back beyond the village of Meintos. M. de Lostanges, who commanded the right column, was the first to perceive the enemy's camp in two lines, masking the two roads to Vikensen and Kapelagen on a level with Furvol; this retarded our projects. It being already late and the days now

<sup>1</sup> D'Eon to the Duke de Choiseul, January 12, 1764, and MS. notes. *Lett. Mém. &c.* i. 145.

short we purpose retreating. I send M. D'Eon to withdraw the Swiss and grenadiers of Champagne, who are holding in check the Scottish highlanders lining the wood on the crest of the mountain, whence they have caused us much annoyance. I say no more, because M. D'Eon, who will afterwards give you this note, will himself relate the incidents of this attack. I send him off at once that he may have time to look for you and find you before night.

‘THE COUNT DE BROGLIO.’

‘Written on the field of battle near the village of Meintos, in the gorge of the mountains of the camp of Einbeck, November 7, 1761.’

At Osterwiek, some six to seven hundred Frankish Prussians having intercepted communication with Wolfenbüttel, which was being besieged by Marshal Xavier de Saxe, M. de Saint-Victor was ordered to dislodge them from their position with a few volunteers, twenty hussars, and eighty dragoons of the regiment of d'Autichamp and of de la Ferronaye, in charge of D'Eon. The little detachment of horse was bravely led, and the exploit proved a brilliant one, for the enemy's battalion was completely routed and every man made a prisoner.

The dispute between the Marshals de Soubise and de Broglio as to who was in the right and who in the wrong at the battle of Villinghausen, had never come to an end; for de Broglio, as became the first soldier of France, refused to be put on a par with the hero of Rosbach. The campaign of 1761 being virtually over, de Broglio felt it was quite time the matter were resolved; and having obtained permission to return to Versailles, hoping to justify his conduct in person, he delivered to the Duke de Choiseul, now Minister for War, for delivery to the King, a lengthy statement particularising the events of July 15 and 16; but

the Marquise de Pompadour had taken care that her favourite should not be the sufferer, and nothing the marshal could have urged was likely to serve his cause, or alter de Pompadour's determination to punish him. His Majesty disapproved of the marshal's 'Mémoire' as being contrary to the interests of his service and a bad example in his kingdom, and ordered him to retire to his country seat, there to remain until further notice.<sup>1</sup>

On leaving Cassel for Versailles, the Marshal and Count de Broglio were accompanied by their aide-de-camp D'Eon, who separated himself from the army never to return to it, through no fault, however, or wish of his own. Short as was his military career, it was at least brilliant, the qualities he displayed of a brave soldier meeting with the high commendation of his superiors, to whom he had become so closely attached by the nature of his duties.

'We certify that M. D'Eon de Beaumont, captain of the regiment of dragoons of d'Autichamp, formerly Caraman, has served under our orders as our aide-de-camp; that during the whole of the campaign of 1761 we very frequently employed him in carrying the orders of the general, and that he has, upon several occasions, given proofs of the greatest intelligence and of the greatest valour; notably at Höxter, in executing, in presence of, and under the fire of, the enemy, the perilous operation of removing the powder and other stores of the King; at the reconnaissance and at the battle of Ultrop, where he was wounded in the thigh; and near Osterwiek<sup>2</sup> where, as second captain of a troop of eighty dragoons, under the orders of M. de Saint-Victor, commanding the volunteers of the army, they charged the Frankish Prussian battalion of Rhes with such

<sup>1</sup> Louis XV. to Marshal de Broglio. De Broglie, i. 438.

<sup>2</sup> I would here say what I have said to my generals, that the success of this little enterprise is due chiefly to the Chev. de la Tulley, Captain of the de la Ferronaye dragoons, and to M. Casette, formerly Lieutenant of the d'Autichamp dragoons. Note by D'Eon, *Pièces Relatives*, &c. 31.

effect and determination that they took them prisoners of war, notwithstanding the superior number of the enemy.

‘In testimony whereof, we have delivered to him this certificate, signed with our hand, countersigned by our secretary, and have affixed thereunto our seals.

‘Done at Cassel, December 24, 1761.

‘L.S. The Marshal Duke de Broglio.

‘L.S. The Count de Broglio.

‘By Order, DROUET.’

It was the fate of the Count de Broglio, for no ostensible reason, to share the exile of his brother, but with that spirit of contradiction and fickleness inherent in Louis XV., he was retained on the staff of the secret correspondence and ordered to continue his customary duties, the King telling Tercier he was *forced* to act as he did. The truth is that the King could scarcely do without him, and had felt the force of the remonstrance the count had the courage to offer when on the point of leaving Paris for the family estate. ‘Your Majesty may recollect that for several years past I have foreseen the storm which to-day bursts over me. The very marks of your Majesty’s favour have gathered it about me,’—words that were but the echo of others the count had addressed to the King years before, when similarly misunderstood and suspected by his Majesty’s ministers.

‘. . . I only know how to obey, and I should never have been placed in the position of upholding, even in the smallest degree, the reputation I have gained for obstinacy and hardness of heart, were I not obliged to execute secret instructions that are frequently in opposition to direct orders, with which it is difficult to reconcile them. . . .’<sup>1</sup>

We are purposely dwelling on these murmurings of

<sup>1</sup> The Count de Broglio to Louis XV., February 10, 1762, and March 24, 1768. De Broglie, ii. 5; i. 300.

the Count de Broglio that we may be the better able to show hereafter that he was not the only victim, amongst the confidential correspondents and agents, to the King's caprice and selfish indifference.

The new year opened with an event—perhaps upon the whole unfortunate for France—the not altogether unexpected death of Elizabeth (January 5); and the accession of Peter III. was the signal for a cessation of hostilities and a complete change of front on the part of Russia. The new Tsar agreed with Frederick to a truce, which developed into an alliance, and afforded him the opportunity for gratifying his tastes for all that was German, and further alienating the respect and sympathy of his people. In her struggle against her husband, for liberty and even life, Catherine turned to France for succour—a circumstance that called for decision and steadfastness of purpose on the part of the French representative at her Court; but the Baron de Breteuil proved himself unequal to the occasion by his pusillanimity and hesitation,<sup>1</sup> and Catherine effected her will independently of French support. The disease was quickly acknowledged and the remedy as quickly found. De Breteuil was to be replaced by D'Eon upon the recommendations of the Duke de Choiseul and of the Count de Broglio, although on different grounds; the King readily approving, because in him would be combined with the minister plenipotentiary what was of greatest importance to his Majesty—a well-trying secret correspondent.<sup>2</sup> Other events, however, bid fair to change these plans. The Emperor was disposed of, and Catherine,

<sup>1</sup> The Marquis de l'Hôpital had retired the preceding autumn.

<sup>2</sup> Louis XV. to Tercier, June 1, June 19, July 28, 1762. Boutaric, i. 274, 275, 277. D'Eon received a gratuity of three thousand livres from the King (probably as a salve to the disappointment he must have felt at missing promotion). Louis XV. to Tercier, August 31, 1762. *Ibid.* i. 278.

in grasping the sceptre, said: 'If I go to war it will be to suit my own convenience, and not to please others, as was the case with the Empress Elizabeth.' From various causes Louis XV. refused to continue with Catherine the secret correspondence he had entertained with her predecessor, and D'Eon's services were consequently no longer required at the Russian capital. De Breteuil was suffered to remain at his post until, too glad to escape the ever-increasing difficulties of his position, he was removed, at his own request, to Stockholm.

## CHAPTER IV.

Portrait of Catherine II.—Her opinion of D'Eon and its fidelity—Portrait of Lord Sandwich—Of the Duke de Nivernois—D'Eon, secretary of Embassy in London—Two 'smart pieces of work'—Kindness to French prisoners—Treaty of Peace with England—D'Eon takes the ratifications to Versailles—Delight of King and Ministers—The Marquise de Pompadour—The Count de Guerchy nominated ambassador at St. James'—The Duke de Praslin's estimate of his qualities—The Duke tests D'Eon's loyalty towards himself—The Prince de Soubise at Villinghausen—D'Eon's respect for the Broglies—Is invested with the Cross of Saint Louis.

AMONG D'Eon's acquirements was accuracy in the delineation of portrait character, amusement in which he freely indulged. Describing Catherine II. during the last days of Peter's short reign, he says :—

'The Empress is of prepossessing appearance; she is generally of an amiable disposition, although very cunning, intriguing, and vindictive. Her greatest ambition is to control affairs of importance; she is competent for administration. Her sympathies are entirely English, although she speaks French with great facility of expression. She is very fond of reading, and most of her time, since her marriage, has been spent in devouring the works of such modern French and English authors as treat most vigorously and most liberally on morality, nature, and religion. A work condemned in France is sure to meet with her entire approval. She is never without the works of Voltaire, 'De l'Esprit' of Helvetius, encyclopædias, and the writings of Jean Jacques Rousseau. She prides herself on her courage, on being strong-minded and a philosopher; in a word, she is by nature a little *savante*. She suggests to her husband



changes that may result in the fall of this Emperor of apes, in the hope of reigning in his stead as regent.'<sup>1</sup>

Notwithstanding the sagacity and exactitude, to use the Duke de Broglie's own words, with which this portrait is drawn, testifying to a certain amount of personal knowledge of the subject, the duke, in support of his theory that D'Eon could not at any time have been reader (*lectrice*)<sup>2</sup> to Elizabeth, reproduces a letter of questionable accuracy from Catherine II. to Grimm, to show how complete a cipher he must have been at the Russian Court. It is dated April 13, 1778.

'The Empress Elizabeth never had a reader' (*lectrice*) wrote her Majesty, 'and M. or Mademoiselle D'Eon was not better known to her than to me, who have only known him as a sort of political drudge (*galopin politique*) in the service of the Marquis de l'Hôpital and of the Baron de Breteuil.'<sup>3</sup>

We need not stop to inquire why the Empress Catherine, attached as she was, when grand-duchess, to the party against which all D'Eon's assaults, by command of his sovereign, were directed; and who sat up for nights, translating into French from the Russian, for the edification of Sir Hanbury Williams, all such decisions of the Council as were favourable to France, should have thus expressed herself with regard to the secretary of a brilliant French Embassy; and this in his adversity, twenty-two years after his certain appearance at the Court of Russia for the first time. Apart from D'Eon's own observation that he dined occasionally at

<sup>1</sup> D'Eon to the Count de Broglie, July 1, 1762. De Broglie, ii. 105. Peter III. was assassinated July 14, 1762.

<sup>2</sup> Madame Campan, the contemporary who notices the employment of D'Eon as reader to Elizabeth, employs the term *lecteur*. I do not know on what equally reliable authority the duke uses the word *lectrice*.

<sup>3</sup> De Broglie, ii. 607. I have not been able to consult the original work.

the table of the grand-duke, there exists a letter which tends to controvert the assertion of her Majesty.

*The Marquis de l'Hôpital to M. D'Eon.*

‘Plombières, August 13, 1762.

‘. . . And so the bully<sup>1</sup> has ceased to exist! What a page he will fill in history! Now let us see to the new Catherine. She has all the courage and the qualities requisite for making a great Empress, and I have agreeable recollections of having heard you frequently say so; her firmness, on certain occasions, has always been to your taste. It should also be admitted that you discovered the hidden virtues of the Princess Dashkoff; it is true that you have known her and cultivated her friendship since her earliest youth, and that you and the Chevalier Douglas encouraged her romantic temperament.’<sup>2</sup>

We have here, at any rate, the testimony of the French ambassador to D'Eon's personal knowledge of the Empress Catherine, and of his intimacy with the Princess Dashkoff,<sup>3</sup> of whom we will have something to say hereafter.

In taking leave of Russia and its concerns, as we must now do, we are brought to the close of the Seven Years' War, and our attention turns for a time to the relations of France with Great Britain during the administration of Lord Bute.

The preliminaries of the notable peace of 1763, between France and England, were signed at Fontainebleau on November 3, 1762, the ambassador selected to conduct the negotiations in England being the Duke de Nivernois, once ambassador at Rome, and sent to Berlin in trying circumstances (1756) to endeavour to treat with Frederick. Gaillardet and the Duke de

<sup>1</sup> Peter III.

<sup>2</sup> *Lett. Mém. &c.* i. 382.

<sup>3</sup> Countess Catherine Woronzoff was the maiden name of this lady.

Broglie fall into the same singular error in attributing to this nobleman a portrait by D'Eon, the latter adding disdainfully—'the portrait was in all probability one that pleased D'Eon, for in his official correspondence the same is applied, word for word, to Lord Sandwich.' That it was intended for the libertine English peer, of whom it was said

Search earth, search hell, the devil cannot find  
An agent, like Lothario, to his mind,

is clear enough, although even upon its first appearance the Duke de Praslin thought fit to apply the sketch to himself, and showed his resentment towards the author of it in a very tangible manner.

'Sincerity and cheerfulness are the chief characteristics of this minister, who in every office and embassy enjoyed by him has always appeared, like Anacreon, crowned with roses and singing of joys in the midst of the most arduous labours. He is by nature inclined to idleness; nevertheless, he toils as if unable to live at rest, and abandons himself to this easy and idle life so soon as he feels he is free. His natural capacities and his happy state of cheerfulness, his sagacity and his activity in affairs of importance, never give him cause for uneasiness, nor do they produce *wrinkles on his forehead*; and although it is necessary to have lived a long time with a minister to be able to describe his character, to say what degree of courage or weakness he possesses, how far he is prudent or cunning, I am able to say, from the present moment, that ——— is shrewd and discerning without being deceitful or crafty. He is but little susceptible to hatred and to friendship, although on several occasions he has appeared to be completely under the influence of the one or the other; for, on the one hand, he is separated from his wife, he hates her and does her no harm; on the other, he has a mistress, he cherishes her and does her no great good. Upon the whole, he is certainly one of the merriest and most agreeable ministers in Europe.'

<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Lett. Mém. &c.* i. 104.

Repudiating the charge of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, D'Eon says :—

‘Unable to apply to himself all the good in this portrait, the Duke de Praslin has applied to himself all the evil as suiting him best; such, for instance, as the wrinkles or horns on his forehead, weakness and knavery, the little loved wife, the much loved mistress, neither of which is the better nor the worse in consequence. M. D'Eon will learn by this how circumspect one should be. He will take it as a rule that every time the portrait of a ridiculous man at a foreign court is depicted, there will always be somebody at Versailles to resemble him.’<sup>1</sup>

D'Eon has not left us without a rough outline of the Duke de Nivernois, to whom he was devotedly attached.

‘. . . His only fault is the coquetry to please everybody; coquetry which often secures to us more enemies than true friends, but which, notwithstanding, has never chilled the sentiments of admiration and gratitude that I have vowed to him. . . . Is any greater proof needed of the coquetry and desire to please everybody than this *exemplum*?’

‘In Paris the duke houses and boards a Jesuit, who dines regularly every day at his table; and yet he is a friend of thirty years’ standing of the destructor of the Order of Jesuits.<sup>2</sup> Whilst in London he absolutely wished to be a friend at Court and in favour in the city; a friend of the party in the majority, and of the party in the minority; he also sought, comically enough, to reconcile the Duke of Newcastle and Lord Bute, Mr. Pitt and the Duke of Bedford. He was enamoured of thirty thousand maidens, and pretended to be dying of love whenever he met the charming Duchess of Grafton, and this because the duke, her husband, was one of the leaders of the Opposition.’<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Lett. Mém.* &c. MS. notes, 99, 101.

<sup>2</sup> The Duke de Choiseul, during whose ministry (1764) the Jesuits were expelled from France, the Order being wisely suppressed by Clement XIV. in 1773.

<sup>3</sup> *Lett. Mém.* &c. MS. note, i. v. Junius taunts the Duke of Grafton on his wife's infidelity. This lady, a daughter of Lord Ravensworth, obtained a divorce from the duke in 1769, and was afterwards married to the Earl of Ossory.

D'Eon would have preferred a soldier's career had he been free to choose. Ministers combined to dissuade him, the Duke de Praslin bidding him 'hang up his sword,' there being nothing for him to do in the army, and the Duke de Nivernois invited him to become his secretary of Embassy in London. D'Eon felt that four years' service as secretary in Russia, 'under critical and most important circumstances,' to use de Nivernois' own words, entitled him rather to advancement, and in accepting the post in London purely from personal regard for the duke, he took the liberty of making it a condition that he should return to France with the ambassador at the termination of his mission.

Accompanied by this secretary the duke crossed the Channel in September. When his lean figure appeared at the place of embarkation at Calais, an English sailor said to his mate, 'I say, d'ye see how thin that duke is? I remember him as a fine fat fellow. This is how we've skinned the French swells in the war.' And so greatly struck by his appearance was an English gentleman (Mr. C. Townsend, one of the *Flag* party) on seeing him for the first time that he exclaimed: 'What! the French have sent over the preliminaries of a man to sign the preliminaries of peace!'

In the course of the transactions on the Treaty of Peace, D'Eon executed a somewhat adroit, though entirely indefensible act, which caused no little mirth and secret joy at Versailles. The negotiations so happily commenced met with an obstacle, and being checked in their progress a sort of crisis supervened, when Mr. Wood, Under Secretary of State, called on the Duke de Nivernois to confer on certain contested points, and having his portfolio with him was indiscreet enough to say that it contained the final instructions and ultimatum

which Lord Egremont had directed him to transmit to the Duke of Bedford, the King's ambassador at the Court of Versailles. Upon hearing this the duke looked at D'Eon, and then cast his eye on the portfolio. D'Eon quickly caught at the sense of this pantomime. It would be a matter of great importance to the French Court to know the nature of the instructions and the terms of this 'fatal ultimatum.' He made a sign to the duke, who at once invited Mr. Wood to stay to dinner and talk over matters. He wished him, he said, to taste some samples of good wine from Tonnerre. . . . The bait took, and whilst the duke and Mr. Wood were enjoying their bumpers, D'Eon extracted from the portfolio Lord Egremont's despatches, caused exact copies to be taken, and forwarded them instantly to Versailles, the French courier arriving twenty-four hours earlier than Mr. Wood's. When the Duke of Bedford called to broach the subject, de Choiseul and de Praslin, already apprised of the difficulties about to be raised, and of the British ambassador's final instructions, were readily enabled to come to terms. This was a smart piece of work in de Nivernois' opinion,<sup>1</sup> and de Praslin declared there was nobody like D'Eon, and that he was quite deserving of all the King's favours.

D'Eon was instrumental in smoothing away another difficulty. The Duke de Nivernois had altered several articles in the ultimatum of the treaty, an act which gave umbrage to the English ministers, and Count Viri apprised him that if he did not withdraw the alterations he might as well leave the country; to which the duke replied that neither his honour nor dignity would allow of his withdrawing an ultimatum given in the name of

<sup>1</sup> The Duke de Nivernois to the Duke de Praslin, January 12, 1763. De Broglie, ii. 107. Gaill. 92.

the King. Matters were looking serious, when D'Eon proposed that the duke should tell Lords Bute and Egremont of his secretary's excess of zeal in making alterations unknown to himself. 'Every tongue will rail, every mouth open upon me,' continued D'Eon. 'With all my heart; and if you choose you may also say that you will send me back to France.' The duke caught at the idea, and had the generosity to explain to de Praslin and to the King his indebtedness to D'Eon.<sup>1</sup>

The conduct of the secretary of Embassy during progress of the negotiations was all that his superiors could desire, and he earned the gratitude of many a French prisoner by his exertions in administering to their comfort. Scarcely a letter left the ambassador that was not replete with the highest encomiums.

*The Duke de Nivernois to the Duke de Praslin.*

'D'Eon is at work as usual from morning to night. I cannot sufficiently extol his zeal, vigilance, amiability of disposition, and activity. . . . When the state of my health will force me to quit this country, in the spring, I will, with your permission, leave our little D'Eon until my successor is appointed, and I promise that he will do well and be favourably received. He is very active, very discreet, never exhibiting curiosity or officiousness; never giving cause for mistrust or acting defiantly, *quod est inveniendum*, because here the majority of men are like the most unmanageable of horses. . . .'<sup>2</sup>

On February 10, 1763, Mr. Richard Neville Neville left Paris for London with the Treaty of Peace signed that same evening by the plenipotentiaries of Great Britain, France, and Spain;<sup>3</sup> a treaty that compelled

<sup>1</sup> *European Mag.* vol. xiv.

<sup>2</sup> The Duke de Nivernois to the Duke de Praslin, October 2, November 14, 1762. *Lett. Mém. &c.* i. 246.

<sup>3</sup> The signatories were—the Duke of Bedford, the Duke de Praslin, and the Marquis Grimaldi.

France to part with all the territory she had acquired in Germany, England retaining the whole of Canada, Nova Scotia, Cape Breton, the Gulf and River of St. Lawrence, Grenada, St. Vincent, Dominica, Tobago, Senegal, some territory to the east of the Mississippi, and Minorca. Spain received Louisiana from France in exchange for Florida, given up to England, France being permitted to retain Belleisle, Martinique, and Guadaloupe—also Chandernagor and Pondicherry, on condition that they should not be fortified, and further engaging to demolish the defences at Dunkirk.

‘Such were the results,’ says an eminent French writer of our times, ‘of the Seven Years’ War. Fortunate for England and Prussia, of little cost to Austria, to whom an irreparable loss was simply made too evident; of no moment to Russia, who had availed herself of it for training her army, but most fatal to France, which had entrusted her colonies, her navy, her finances, and her military honour, to her debased nobles. . . . The minister himself who signed the Treaty of Paris will in time be considered too intelligent and too proud to be the servant of Louis XV. when France, falling a step lower, will have passed out of the hands of Madame de Pompadour into the still viler hands of Madame Dubarry.’

It was an unprecedented mark of favour on the part of George III. to confide to D'Eon the ratifications to the Treaty for conveyance to his Majesty's ambassador at Versailles.<sup>1</sup> In announcing to de Praslin the approaching departure of his secretary on the proud mission, de Nivernois claimed for him, in accordance with usage, a gratuity of equal value—one thousand crowns—to that about to be received from his own Government by Mr. Neville for having brought the

<sup>1</sup> D'Eon left London with the ratifications of the definite treaty on February 23rd, and delivered them to the Duke of Bedford on the 26th. *France Correspondence*, Public Record Office.



Treaty to London. De Praslin insisted that no English minister would ever think of entrusting such precious documents to a foreigner; it would be contrary to rule and custom, and it would therefore be idle to expect that D'Eon should be selected for the duty. It was the duke's anxiety, he said, to serve his secretary, that had blinded him to facts and precedent. D'Eon was still young enough to be of good service, and he should take care to afford him the opportunity for earning distinction. When, later, the Foreign Minister had to acknowledge his mistake, he considered the choice of D'Eon to be a very straightforward proceeding on the part of the King of England and of his ministers, who were giving proofs of the nobility of their sentiments, and inspiring the desire and hope for the establishment and maintenance of good relations and lasting concord between the two Courts. 'I am very glad you were stupid enough<sup>1</sup> to believe it impossible that the French secretary—my little D'Eon—should be the bearer of the King of England's ratifications,' wrote De Nivernois in reply.<sup>2</sup>

*The Duke de Nivernois to Louis XV.*

'London, February 17, 1763.

'Sire,—M. D'Eon, Captain in the d'Autichamp regiment of dragoons, and my Secretary of Embassy, takes to the Duke of Bedford the ratifications to the Treaty of Peace; it is a compliment on the part of the King of England. This prince avails himself with pleasure of a Frenchman for so honourable and important a mission, and I consider such a step, which is out of the usual course, as striking evidence of his desire for unity and cordial relations. I cannot refrain, Sire, upon this occasion, from bearing witness to the zeal and abilities of

<sup>1</sup> The Duke de Nivernois was little aware that he was saying a great truth. Note by D'Eon.

<sup>2</sup> The Duke de Nivernois Correspondence. *Lett. Mém. &c.*

M. D'Eon, and I must truthfully assure your Majesty that he is in every way most worthy of your Majesty's protection and favour as a diplomatist and soldier.'

D'Eon attributed his good luck to the kindness of the King of England, of Lord Bute, Count Viri, the Duke de Nivernois, and to his own *savoir-faire*. 'He brings me luck,' said Louis XV., who received him warmly, and shortly afterwards conferred upon him the Cross of the Royal and Military Order of Saint Louis, a gratuity of six thousand livres, and raised his salary to the maximum of one thousand crowns. De Praslin was delighted, said D'Eon was a good-looking fellow, a hard worker who had performed his mission with great diligence, and awarded him a gratuity of two thousand crowns. Even the Marquise de Pompadour expressed her satisfaction, in a letter to de Nivernois, at seeing one who it was said was an excellent person, and had served his King in several countries, employed to bring the Treaty to France. She considered it a great act of politeness on the part of the English to entrust him with the Treaty. She liked the King of England, who was full of candour and humanity, and possessed every virtue that constituted a good king.<sup>1</sup>

It had been arranged from the beginning that the Duke de Nivernois' embassy should end with the completion of the negotiations, the minister nominated to succeed him being the Count de Guerchy, with whom we are already acquainted. 'I must do him the justice to say,' wrote the British ambassador in Paris, 'that de Guerchy has a universal good character as a soldier and a man of honour.'<sup>2</sup> But the Duke of Bedford was greatly led into error in this estimate of the character

<sup>1</sup> The Duke de Nivernois Correspondence. *Lett. Mém. &c.*

<sup>2</sup> *France Correspondence*, Public Record Office.

of a nobleman who was selected regardless of any qualification but that of rank, his strongest recommendation being his marriage with a lady of the House of Harcourt, and his only claims to the highest ambassadorial post in the gift of the King being the favour of the Marquise de Pompadour and a short period of obscure service in the war. He is described by Gaillardet as one of those gentlemen who live nobly in noble idleness, who are charitable until their own purse is touched, ostentatious until called upon to spend, ambitious of high office for the sake of the title, and of the title for the sake of the emolument ; esteeming a good estate preferable to a good education ; and persuaded that one always knows enough when of good birth, in good health, and possessing a good income. De Praslin's own opinion of the man he was about to employ as ambassador in London is best gathered from what he says of him to de Nivernois :—

‘ I am still very much concerned about de Guerchy. I am not sure, however, that we are doing him good service by appointing him ambassador in London. He is not liked in this country. I dread his despatches like fire, and you know how defective despatches disparage a man and his office. A minister is often judged less by the manner in which he conducts business than by the account he gives of it. I believe that our dear friend will do well. I do not think I have anybody better fitted. But he cannot write at all ; we must not deceive ourselves on this point.’<sup>1</sup>

De Nivernois was out of health when he accepted the mission to England at the urgent instance of the King and of his old friend the Count de Choiseul, shortly afterwards created Duke de Praslin, and he never ceased to complain of his physical sufferings from the day he began to live in a climate that did not suit him. He had

<sup>1</sup> January 8, 1703. *Lett. Mém. &c.* iii. 74.

always hoped to leave 'his little D'Eon' in charge until de Guerchy's nomination was officially notified. He trembled for that poor novice in politics when he thought of the difficulties he should experience in a country where people were far from being like ordinary men; for this envoy of an absolute monarch, puzzled and perplexed in all probability at the large distribution of political power in England, and the number of those who shared in the responsibilities of government, gave it as his opinion that to conduct negotiations in the country to which he had been accredited was nothing short of hard labour!

We cannot resist quoting here, in their place, a few lines from a letter of de Praslin to his friend in London, which serve to expose, with what has already been said, the worth and honesty of purpose of the men who were directing the affairs of France.

'You make me ill, my dear friend, in continually telling me that you are so. . . . it is true that we are both engaged in a calling that does not suit us; you will soon be out of it, and I assure you that I should be pleased had I a similar prospect.'<sup>1</sup>

The opportunity for leaving D'Eon in charge on the departure of the ambassador seeming to be lost, de Nivernois recommended him for appointment as Resident, an arrangement desirable in the interests of the King's service, and one which would enable de Guerchy to receive such valuable assistance as no other person but the secretary of Embassy was qualified to render, for he was fully competent to continue the work he, the ambassador, had commenced. D'Eon's presence was preferable to that of a stranger. Lord Bute had taken a fancy to him, which was saying a great deal, and was

<sup>1</sup> The Duke de Nivernois Correspondence. *Lett. Mém. &c.*

a piece of luck that might not fall to a new-comer. On the other hand, D'Eon was being informed by M. Sainte Foy, senior clerk at the Foreign Office, that it was earnestly desired he should remain with de Guerchy, and yet de Praslin was slow in paying the smallest attention to de Nivernois' frequent recommendations in his favour. De Praslin had his reasons; he doubted D'Eon's loyalty towards himself, and suspected him of being in correspondence with the exiled de Broglios. He should put him to the test, and how this was accomplished shall be related in D'Eon's own words:—

'One evening about midnight, towards the end of March, the Duke de Praslin put me through a kind of interrogatory. Sainte Foy was a witness. The duke said: "You were at the battle of Villinghausen, M. D'Eon; tell me all you saw and all you know with regard to that action." I did so conscientiously, relating to him all I saw with my own eyes. My recital not being either to his taste or to that of the Count de Guerchy, his satellite, who was present, he interrupted me frequently by stamping his foot; and rising from his chair he said to me several times: "I know it to have been the contrary to what you say, and this from one of my intimate friends who was also there." He alluded to the Count de Guerchy. He then looked at Sainte Foy. At every reply I made, the duke looked cross and gave a sardonic smile. "But, my dear D'Eon, you surely did not witness all you relate?" I persisted in assuring him, as I should do to my life's end, that I had perfectly well seen and heard what I had told him. The duke concluded by saying: "It is your attachment to the de Broglios that makes you speak as you do." "Faith, sir!" I replied; "it is my attachment to the truth. You question me, and I can only tell you what I myself know." After we had left the minister, Sainte Foy scolded me in a friendly way for my want of policy. "My dear D'Eon," he said, "I fear you will never make your fortune in this country. Be off to England as quickly as you can." "I wish for nothing better," was my reply.'

<sup>1</sup> *Mém. de la Chevalière D'Eon.* Gaill. 115

Eighteen years after the battle of Villinghausen, D'Eon wrote:—

‘I maintain in 1779 what I asserted in 1763 at Versailles; yes, I say and maintain, notwithstanding my regard for the Prince de Soubise, notwithstanding my contempt for the Marquise,<sup>1</sup> notwithstanding my indifference as to the good or evil the Choiseuls may do to me, that had Soubise’s army actually attacked the enemy on the morning of July 16, 1761, in compliance with the Marshal de Broglio’s urgent request on the nights of July 15 and 16 (of which the Chevalier Nort, aide-de-camp to the Marshal, was the bearer), after the important advantage obtained by the Marshal at Villinghausen the evening of the 15th, it was clear to the whole of de Broglio’s army, with the exception of the cowardly fawners to the party at that time in power at Court; I say it was clear that the English and Hanoverian army would have been beaten and irremediably routed. I am far from being wanting in gratitude to my protectors and from entertaining the slightest feeling of hatred towards the Prince de Soubise. I respect his heart-bred virtues as I do his distinguished birth. Had he been as great a general as he is brave and attached to his King and country, and generous towards his friends and enemies, he would be worthy of being at the head of all the armies of Europe. Too much kindness, too much faith in the ignorant and in those intriguers who were obsequious to him, restrained him a hundred times, as on the morning of July 16, from executing what he had wished and what he had already ordered; that is to say, to advance on the enemy, to attack and defeat him in concert with the Marshal de Broglio.’<sup>2</sup>

A few days after his interview with de Praslin, D'Eon was asked confidentially by the Duchess de Nivernois if he was not in correspondence with M. de Broglio. ‘No, madam,’ said D'Eon, ‘and I am sorry for it, as I am very fond of the Marshal de Broglio, but I do not wish to trouble him with my letters; I am satisfied with writing to him on each New Year’s Day.’

<sup>1</sup> De Pompadour.

<sup>2</sup> Ch. MSS. 951.

‘I am very glad to hear this for your sake, my dear little friend,’ continued the duchess. ‘Let me tell you in confidence that intimacy with the House of de Broglie might be of injury to you at Court, and in the mind of de Guerchy, your future ambassador.’

D'Eon had not strayed from the truth, for it was the Count de Broglie, whose name had not been mentioned in the two conversations just related, who was his frequent correspondent, and not the marshal, with whom he communicated but seldom, supplying him with the news of the day, but chiefly with Court gossip. Speaking of de Soubise in a letter to the marshal, D'Eon says:—

‘Twere well if the prince fought the enemy single-handed, because this athlete before girding himself for the fight was anointed with Court oil only, and it is not adapted to ward off the blows of an enemy. It might be said—there is a chance of luck, because the fate of arms is uncertain. This is not true. The fate of arms is uncertain to a great captain; but to a bad captain it is always certain.’<sup>1</sup>

Referring in after years to his interview with de Praslin, on the subject of the battle of Villinghausen, we find D'Eon saying:—

‘They tried to induce or to force me to speak ill of the Marshal de Broglie and his campaigns. I could not have done so even had I wished it, because I have always known the Marshal and his brother to be solely engaged in the interests of the King’s service, and in all such plans and operations as should best accrue to the advantage and to the glory of the French arms, and of those of their allies. The Marshal practised every military virtue in his own person, and it was an admirable thing to witness that, although beyond the reach of all competitors, he contested with himself for glory of which he sought to deprive his earlier actions, by the performance of still more brilliant deeds. I have always been devotedly attached to

<sup>1</sup> De Broglie, ii. 105.

the late dear Count de Broglio,<sup>1</sup> not so much because he liked me and because he was the secret minister of Louis XV., but because I ever found in him the *vir probus et propositi tenax* of whom Horace speaks; and this, notwithstanding his numerous enemies, or, rather, the number of those who envied him for his merits. Ever as brave in the Cabinet as on the field, he was at all times faithful to God, the King, his country, his brave soldiers and his word. When, in days gone by, we were serving together, and he called me the *Chevalier Bayard sans peur et sans reproche*, he did so because he did not know me as thoroughly and as well as I knew him.'<sup>2</sup>

On March 30 D'Eon arrived in London, and was on the same day invested with the Cross of the Royal and Military Order of Saint Louis<sup>3</sup> by the Duke de Nivernois, at his own request as had been pre-arranged. He had brought with him some costly presents from his royal master to the Count Viri, Envoy Extraordinary from the King of Sardinia (well known in English history as being engaged in secret negotiations with Lord Bute), in recognition of his valuable services, being the first to mediate for peace between Great Britain and the two illustrious Houses of Bourbon, the King's thanks being conveyed to the Sardinian minister in a letter from de Praslin.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Written circa 1806. The Count de Broglio died in 1781.

<sup>2</sup> Ch. MSS. 814, 767. 'Preamble to Will.'

<sup>3</sup> This highly esteemed order, instituted in 1693 by Louis XIV., fell in abeyance in 1890.

<sup>4</sup> The presents, valued at fifty thousand crowns, consisted of his Majesty's portrait set in diamonds, a costly Savonnerie carpet, and superb Gobelin tapestry. They were shown by Lord Bute to the King, who considered they were magnificent, and the letter charming.



## CHAPTER V.

D'Eon becomes Resident and Chargé d'Affaires at the British Court—Also the King's special secret agent—Plans for the invasion of England—Nicknames to secret correspondents—Louis XV.'s letter to D'Eon on the survey of England—De Pompadour discovers the secret correspondence—The King's vexation—D'Eon advanced to be Minister Plenipotentiary—How he received his new honours—De Broglie's anxiety for the safety of the King's papers—De Pompadour's conspiracy to ruin D'Eon—Claims against the Crown—Letter of State in favour of D'Eon.

THE appointment, dated April 17, of the Chevalier D'Eon as Resident and Chargé d'Affaires, relieved de Nivernois of his functions and left him free to return to his home and 'get rid of the violent and well-seasoned cold from which he was suffering—an English cold that seemed to have no end;' but he delayed his departure for the purpose of proceeding to Oxford and receiving the degree of Doctor, *in facultate juris*. The duke, who had never been in England before, declared the journey had been most instructive to him. He saw some of the finest things in the world, was greatly astonished at the general high state of cultivation, and at the absence of poor people in the districts through which he travelled—the poorest seemed well to do, and would pass for burgesses in any small French provincial town. De Nivernois left London in May, travelling leisurely to Dover, chiefly in consequence of the state of his health, but also from a wish to see places on the road, and especially Chatham dockyard, and was no doubt the identical French ambassador of whom Smollett, who posted over the same ground a week or two later, relates

in one of his letters that he was charged forty pounds by a knave of a publican at Canterbury for a supper that was not worth forty shillings!

On leaving for England, D'Eon had become the secret correspondent of Louis XV., with whom and with the Count de Broglio and Tercier he was to communicate, in cypher or otherwise, as occasion might require, his instructions being similar in every particular to those he received when on his earliest journey to St. Petersburg in 1755.

The first duty upon which the Chevalier was engaged in the capacity of secret agent was to assist in the perfection of a scheme for the invasion of England, devised by the Count de Broglio, approved by the King, whose hatred towards England had greatly intensified since the conclusion of peace, and a task ultimately accomplished to the satisfaction of his Majesty in the face of numerous difficulties. Two persons were selected by de Broglio to effect, in concert, the great work in hand—one, the active agent, was a young officer of Engineers of considerable ability and established reputation, Carlet de la Rosière, who had served during the war, and had been attached for a time as aide-de-camp to the Duke de Broglio. A prisoner of the Prussians, Frederick refused to sanction his exchange. 'When an officer of distinction is taken,' said that monarch, 'he is retained as long as possible.'<sup>1</sup> The other, the passive agent, was de la Rosière's kinsman, the Chevalier D'Eon. The undertaking was to be completed without the knowledge of any of the King's ministers, and besides the two named, one other person only was admitted into the secret, according to the King's will.

<sup>1</sup> De Broglie, ii. 97.

‘M. Durand,—The Count de Broglio having communicated to me the ideas you have originated as to the more desirable means to be employed for resisting the ambition and arrogance of the English nation, I have approved of the plans he has proposed to me on this subject, and have ordered him to proceed with the work. I have enjoined him not to communicate on the matter with anybody except the Sieur D'Eon and Tercier. But as I am aware of the knowledge you possess with regard to this object, and of the service you can render, I desire to send direct word to you, that you are to work in concert with the Count de Broglio and the Sieur Tercier in all that concerns this affair, and that you will communicate to them all you may find having reference thereto, in the dépôt of foreign affairs of which you are in charge. You will continue to maintain the most profound secrecy towards everybody, no matter who, with the exception of the persons named above.<sup>1</sup> LOUIS.’

‘June 5, 1763.’

Every conceivable precaution was taken to avoid discovery and ensure success, and that de la Rosière might not incur the smallest risk of detection by papers of a compromising character being found about his luggage or person, he was ordered to make his periodical reports orally, if possible, to the Chevalier D'Eon, who was to note and retain them within the inviolable precincts of the Embassy, of which he was the *genius loci*. The King was not indifferent to his own safety.

*Louis XV. to M. Tercier.*

‘. . . The Sieur de Rozières runs the risk of being arrested in the course of his researches and travels; I do not wish that, in such a case, anything in my hand should be found in his possession; it is my desire, therefore, that he leaves everything with the Sieur D'Eon, who, being officially accredited, cannot be arrested in the same manner.’<sup>2</sup>

The special cypher to be employed being considered

<sup>1</sup> Boutaric, i. 295.

<sup>2</sup> July 27, 1763; *ibid.* i. 297.

scarcely sufficient security, a nickname was assigned to each person likely to be named in the correspondence :

The King	.	.	.	<i>The counsellor.</i>
Count de Broglio	.	.	.	<i>The deputy.</i>
M. Tercier	.	.	.	<i>The solicitor.</i>
M. Durand	.	.	.	<i>Prudence.</i>
Duke de Nivernois	.	.	.	<i>The honey-tongued.</i>
Duke de Praslin	.	.	.	<i>The bitter-mouthed.</i>
Duke de Choiseul	.	.	.	<i>The red lion, or porcelain.<sup>1</sup></i>
Count de Guerchy	.	.	.	<i>The novice, ram, or horned sheep.</i>
Chevalier D'Eon	.	.	.	<i>Intrepidity, or the dragoon's head.<sup>2</sup></i>

The Chevalier's instructions were contained in the following letters :—

*The Count de Broglio to the Chevalier D'Eon.*

' May 17, 1763.

' I have to thank you for your zeal and friendship towards my brother and myself, for which we are very grateful ; we are only afraid lest you should follow the impulse of your heart and be led into taking some step or forming some design that might prove prejudicial to you, and which we should deeply regret. Be sure to observe the greatest prudence on this point. . . . I need not speak to you of the new ambassador with whom you have to do, for it appears to me that you have already formed a pretty correct estimate of his character. I will only add that he is the most astute man I know, and at the same time the most mistrustful ; you therefore cannot be too much upon your guard against his suspicious and uneasy disposition. You must make such arrangements in the house in which you

<sup>1</sup> ' His brain of whipped cream enclosed within a head of Rouen porcelain, relates pleasantly a quantity of tittle-tattle, accompanied by little nothings.'—D'Eon on the Duke de Choiseul. Ch. MSS. : ' Comparing what has passed between the Duke de Choiseul and us at different times, there does not appear to have been the same frankness and veracity in the latter part of this negotiation as we had hitherto experienced in that minister.'—Duke of Bedford to the Earl of Egremont, Paris, February 16, 1763. *France Correspondence*, Public Record Office.

<sup>2</sup> *Tête de dragon.*

are living as will secure you from being surprised by him or by any other person, at such times as you may be engaged in the secret affairs entrusted to you by the King. Every precaution should be taken to keep all papers connected therewith entirely separate from others ; and provision should be made for their safety in case of death or other accident.'

The count recommended D'Eon to invite his cousin, D'Eon de Mouloise, to stay with him, so that in the event of any unforeseen circumstance he might give him charge of the correspondence, with the strictest injunctions not to pass it on to any person whatsoever, and more especially not to de Guerchy. The count concluded by recommending to D'Eon's protection the Marquis de la Rosière—

'whose governor I appoint you. . . . It only remains for me to testify to the pleasure I experience in having you for one of my lieutenants, on service of such importance as is likely to contribute to the prosperity and glory of the nation. . . .'<sup>1</sup>

*Louis XV. to the Chevalier D'Eon.*

'The Sieur D'Eon will receive through the Count de Broglio or M. Tercier, my orders on the surveys to be made in England, whether on the coasts or in the interior of that country, and he will comply with the instructions he will receive to that end, as if he received them direct from me. It is my desire that he shall observe the greatest secrecy in this affair, and that he will not make any communications thereon to any person living, not even to any ministers wheresoever they may be.

'He will receive a special cypher for corresponding on this subject, under cover of addresses to be indicated to him by the Count de Broglio or the Sieur Tercier, and he will communicate to them, by means of this cypher, all the information he is able to obtain on the designs of England, as regards Russia and Poland, the North, and the whole of Germany, so far as will, in

<sup>1</sup> May 17, 1763. De Broglie, ii. 110.

his opinion, conduce to the interests of my service, of his zeal and attachment to which I am sensible.' <sup>1</sup>

'Versailles, June 3, 1763.'

De Praslin failed, as we have seen, to incriminate the Chevalier in a correspondence with the exiled de Broglios, but it so happened that shortly after receiving the duke's report of his midnight interview with D'Eon, on the subject of the battle of Villinghausen, de Pompadour obtained certain information tending to confirm her suspicions, without, however, affording sufficiently tangible evidence. Unsuccessful in securing this, whichever way she directed the scrutiny of those at Court too pliant to her will, her spirit of malevolence impelled her not to stop short of anything in the attainment of her wishes.

'The delightful discovery,' says D'Eon, 'was made by the fair Marquise de Pompadour, who, one evening in June 1763, relieved the pocket of her lover, as he lay fast asleep, of several papers, amongst which was a letter from me in cypher, deciphered, signed *Auguste*. To rid himself of the importunate questions of this second Maintenon, Louis XV. simply replied: "It is from a woman of letters who is of no importance in England, and who has my permission to give me special news." This new Herodias—inquisitive, restless, jealous and piqued—with the aid of the enlightened Duke de Choiseul fixed her suspicions on me; and as she could not have my head brought by her daughter on a charger, had recourse to one of her worthless adulators,<sup>2</sup> who readily undertook to dispose of me by poison, and thus possess himself of all my letters as he would have the right to do, in the position of ambassador which he was about to occupy in London.'

<sup>1</sup> Boutaric, i. 293.

<sup>2</sup> Regnier, Count de Guerchy, was frequently admitted into the private apartments of the Pompadour. He never missed the opportunity for replacing on her foot her fallen slipper, or carrying her candlestick to her small boudoir or private closet. Such little services were of great weight in the mind of de Pompadour and of every Messaline at Court. Ch. MSS. 'Preamble to Will.'

D'Eon attributed de Pompadour's attention being directed towards himself to the action of an informer with whom he had long been acquainted. We quote his own narrative :—

‘During the time that the negotiations in support of the pretensions of the Prince de Conti to the throne of Poland and to the hand of the Empress Elizabeth were being conducted, a secret correspondence had been organised between the King, the Prince, M. Tercier, the Count Woronzoff, the Chevalier Douglas, and myself. The Sieur Monin, private secretary to the Prince de Conti, was not only privy to it, but was also the most active agent at work with the Chevalier Douglas, in behalf of myself, and of M. Tercier who had unlimited confidence in him. M. Tercier, the most honest of men, and who fancied that everybody else was like himself, had concealed nothing from friend Monin. He had frequently shown him, in my presence, the various communications received from ambassadors and ministers, whether in Poland or in Russia. Unhappily, friend Monin had formerly been tutor to the Count de Guerchy, who had received from him his fine education, and in token of gratitude to the Prince de Conti, the Count de Guerchy turned this counsellor over to him. Monin, in his turn, wishing to testify to his own gratitude, considered it his duty to apprise the Count de Guerchy of what he knew concerning me, so soon as his pupil had become an ambassador and he himself was aware of the inquisition instituted by Madame de Pompadour. He declared to de Guerchy that I had been for a long time in secret correspondence with the King, and that he strongly suspected me of being a link in the mysterious chain which united the House of Broglio to the sovereign. Count de Guerchy lost no time in communicating his conjectures to his friend of thirty years' standing, the Duke de Praslin, who passed them on to Madame de Pompadour. She resolved upon verifying them, and employed every effort to ascertain the truth ; but neither the woman's cunning, nor the caresses of the mistress, nor the stratagems of ministers, were able to wrench the secret from the King, and de Pompadour determined upon resorting to other measures. She had noticed

that Louis XV. habitually carried about him the small golden key of an elegant piece of furniture, a sort of *escritoire*, in his private apartments. Never could the favourite succeed, even in moments of her greatest influence, in obtaining access to this piece of furniture. It was a kind of sanctuary, a holy ark, the refuge, as if a place of exile, of the sovereign's wishes. Louis XV. no longer reigned except over this *escritoire*. He remained king of this article of furniture only; it was the sole portion of his states wherein he had not allowed the courtesan to trespass and defile; the only jewel of his crown he had not laid at her feet. "It contains State papers!" This was his reply to her frequent questions, his laconic and decisive refusal to all her solicitations. Now those were no other papers than the Count de Broglio's and my own correspondence. The Marquise was mistrustful. Besides, it was enough that access to the *escritoire* should be forbidden to make her the more anxious to get at the inside of it. To her policy and hatred was united the feeling of curiosity; forbidden fruit has irresistible charms to a woman. This is a fact since the beginning of the world, and will be to the end.'<sup>1</sup>

After relating de Pompadour's act for satisfying her cupidity, the Chevalier continues:—

'From that day my ruin was resolved upon. I was pointed out to the Duke de Praslin and the Count de Guerchy as an enemy, and I should, no doubt, have incurred immediate disgrace if the favourite's first object had not been to possess herself of the correspondence and papers in my possession. From that time were lavished upon me delusive attentions

<sup>1</sup> Gaill. 117. The Duke de Broglie maintains (*Le Secret du Roi*, ii. 138) that not a word of this pretty tale can be accepted as true—in the first place, because in the year 1763, de Pompadour, already in failing health, enjoyed in appearance only the honours to which she had been accustomed; and because the discovery of the secret by de Pompadour, on becoming known to Tercier, would have been immediately communicated by that gentleman to the Count de Broglio, amongst whose papers is not to be found the least trace of any reference to so important an incident. The duke's assumptions, unsupported by counter-evidence, do not appear to justify his unqualified rejection of the story. His Grace deploras more than once the want of other papers, for the absence of which he is unable to account.



alternately with real vexations, the preludes of the enormities and villainies about to follow. The Count de Guerchy had been recommended to practise dissimulation until such time as he should be with me in England; but the inexperienced diplomatist was unable to restrain himself from being overbearing and insulting towards a man whom he considered as hopelessly lost. The secret confided to him showed itself through all the wretched vexations with which he annoyed me upon the slightest pretext, and I should have guessed it, had not M. Tercier spared me the trouble, in making the following revelation, under date of June 10: "The King sent for me this morning; I found him very pale and very agitated. He told me in an unusual tone of voice that he feared the secret of our correspondence had been violated. He related that having sat down to a *tête-à-tête* supper with Madame de Pompadour a few days ago, he became drowsy after having slightly indulged, the Marquise, he thought, not being altogether innocent in the matter. She took advantage of his nap to relieve him of the key of a particular piece of furniture<sup>1</sup> which his Majesty keeps closed to everybody, and in this way made herself acquainted with your relations with the Count de Broglio. His Majesty suspects this from the state of confusion in which he has found his papers. I am accordingly commanded to require you to observe the greatest prudence and the greatest discretion in your intercourse with his ambassador, who is about to leave for London and who, he has reason to believe, is entirely devoted to the Duke de Praslin and Madame de Pompadour. His Majesty has also declared most positively that he should never have decided upon sending him to England if he had not entirely relied upon you."<sup>2</sup>

The Chevalier's nomination as Resident at the Court of St. James' was succeeded by that, on May 31, of Mr. Neville, in succession to the Duke of Bedford, as Resident and Chargé d'Affaires at the French Court, the same rank with which D'Eon was invested, and with whom Neville was placed in every respect on the

<sup>1</sup> Later, in the Musée des Souverains.

<sup>2</sup> *Mém. de la Chevalière D'Eon.* Gaill. 117.

same footing. D'Eon had been received by George III., but when, in due course, Neville demanded an audience, he was informed by the 'Introducteur des Ambassadeurs' that there never was an instance of a resident having had an audience to present his credentials. Neville pressed his rights until, finding it impossible to approach the King, he reported the difficulty of his situation. De Praslin had in the meantime given official intimation to the above effect to Lord Egremont through D'Eon, and afterwards suggested as a means out of the dilemma that Neville should be accredited minister plenipotentiary, the lowest rank that could be received at the French Court. Lord Egremont quickly reminded the French ministers that since a resident could not be received in audience at the Court of France, they should have better considered their action when making such an appointment. The error was theirs, and it was for them to rectify it by being the first to appoint a minister plenipotentiary, in which case England could reciprocate. An active interchange of letters between the two ministers, from June 13 to July 22, resulted to the great advantage of D'Eon, who received new credential letters giving him the character of minister plenipotentiary, in which quality he was again presented to the King of England; after which, other credentials were furnished to Neville, then for the first time received by his Most Catholic Majesty.<sup>1</sup>

We have reached that period of D'Eon's life—he was but in his thirty-fifth year—when he had become minister plenipotentiary from France at the Court of Great Britain; he had obtained the coveted knighthood of Saint Louis; he was the secret correspondent of Louis XV., and the secret agent of his Majesty and of

<sup>1</sup> *France Correspondence*, Public Record Office.

the Count de Broglio in the drafting of plans for the invasion of England. Numerous congratulations poured in upon him, among them being those of Count Woronzoff and the Marquis de l'Hôpital, his fellow-workers in Russia. How he took his promotion appears in the following letter—a free and outspoken denunciation of what he felt might be in store for him—to the man he most esteemed and loved.

*D'Eon to the Count de Broglio.*

'Providence rewards me above my merits; it is useless for me to shut out fortune; she razes walls to get at me. When I say fortune, I do not mean wealth, for you know that our minister is more than economical; but by fortune I mean honour, preferment. You are aware of my latest promotion in the diplomatic service, for which I neither sought nor asked. A fortuitous chance gave birth to it, another chance will destroy it. I will be none the less the slave of events. You will take notice that I frankly speak the truth when necessary, and whether it be found good or bad, I will go on my own way, and it is quite immaterial to me whether I be retained or sent about my business. I look upon fortune as my waiting-woman, and on truth as my mistress, and it will ever make me sick at heart to have to do my duty under certain chiefs; you understand me. They would turn the course of events to their own special advantage, or to their private views; it is precisely in this that lies what is revolting to my sense of truth, and many take for pride what is but integrity of heart and purpose.'<sup>1</sup>

The Chevalier was greatly liked in English society, and had become a favourite of good George III. We find him included by Horace Walpole amongst the distinguished guests at the Strawberry Hill breakfast given to Madame de Boufflers, and his countrymen were proud of their representative; but a storm was gathering which was about to engulf him, and turn the tide of his

<sup>1</sup> D'Eon to the Count de Broglio, July 21, 1763. De Broglie, ii. 125.

fortunes, so brilliant at the outset, in a completely different direction.

The Count de Broglio's apprehensions for the safety of de la Rosière's reports and other private papers of the King, increased as the time of de Guerchy's departure for England drew nigh. In his restless anxiety, he instructed D'Eon to remove himself and every private document in his charge from the French Embassy, before the ambassador made his appearance, to apartments where they should be absolutely beyond his interference and reach. Any excuse would do to account for his change of residence, and he was recommended to take to live with him either of his kinsmen, D'Eon de Mouloise or Carlet de la Rosière, who would be valuable protection against any attempt at a surprise, and trusty substitutes in the event of any unforeseen accident to himself; in fact, every precaution was to be taken to prevent the secret correspondence from falling into the hands of strangers, and especially of the King's ambassador and ministers. In a few days the precious documents were securely deposited in a house in Dover Street, to which D'Eon removed immediately upon the arrival of the Count de Guerchy.

So thoroughly was the secret maintained that after four months even the late ambassador, the Duke de Nivernois, who was on the most intimate and friendly terms with all at Court, expressed his surprise at D'Eon's having quitted the Embassy. 'Why do you always wish to live by yourself and remain in loneliness?' he wrote; 'how can you live separated from your work, and where can your work be, but under the ambassador's roof?' The Chevalier quotes Psalm cii. 7, and adds cynically: 'I prefer the solitude of my little library to the society of the great. Men are not good

for much. Knaves or fools ; so much for three-fourths of them ; as for the other fourth, they stay at home.'

The Marquise de Pompadour had condemned the Chevalier D'Eon for acts he had not committed—he had not betrayed his connection with the de Broglies, he refused to betray the King his master—both ever existing grievances in her mind, and she decreed his fall and disgrace. Men willing to stoop to do her will, and sufficiently powerful to carry it out, were not wanting at Versailles. With such as the Duke de Praslin, the Count d'Argental, and the Count de Guerchy, pretexts could never fail, and the Chevalier's epistolary dissensions with de Praslin on certain monetary claims against the State, which he honestly persisted in making, as also his just resentment of de Guerchy's censures on what the latter considered excessive outlay at his expense, during the term of D'Eon's office as French representative in London, readily made up the sum of heavy charges wherewith to crush him. We would avoid anticipating events, but let us say here, that designs even on the life of the minister plenipotentiary were contemplated by two, at the least, of the triumvirate which had bound itself to wreck him.<sup>1</sup>

When D'Eon was first sent on secret service to Russia, he had to contract a loan of ten thousand livres on his own account to meet his expenses. Ordered by M. Rouillé, Minister for Foreign Affairs, when despatched to Russia for the second time officially, to remain with the Chevalier Douglas until the arrival of the ambassador, Douglas considered it desirable, in view of the coming changes, that D'Eon's application for reimbursement should not be made except to his own

<sup>1</sup> Treysac de Vergy to the Duke de Choiseul, p. 25. *Pièces Relatives*, &c.

Court, feeling persuaded that sooner or later his claim would be acknowledged by the latter. Acquiescing in this, D'Eon deferred pressing for money, and contented himself by zealously carrying out what he knew to be the wishes of M. Rouillé, who had frequently and authoritatively promised him promotion and rewards, should the mission upon which he was employed turn out a success ; but upon his return to France that minister was no longer in office, and when he solicited the Cardinal de Bernis and the Duke de Choiseul for a settlement, was met by each with the reply, ' You should have obtained payment of my predecessor.'

From the time that de Praslin, as Count de Choiseul, had succeeded his cousin, the Duke de Choiseul, in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, D'Eon took frequent occasion to remind him of his entangled situation, arising from having to pay interest on the original loan of ten thousand livres expended in the interests of the Crown. His debt had increased to fifteen thousand livres, and he found himself seriously compromised and threatened by his creditors, with no prospect whatever, considering his own limited resources, of being able to satisfy their just demands. Having settled his small property on his mother, he was entirely dependent on his own exertions, and, notwithstanding the estimation in which his services were held, he had always been kept a poor man. His salary as secretary of Embassy in Russia never exceeded three thousand livres, and even that was reduced to one thousand crowns upon the Duke de Choiseul assuming office. When on leave of absence from his regiment, awaiting orders to proceed to St. Petersburg, his pay was stopped ; and as secretary of Embassy in London he was in receipt of three thousand livres only. ' Three thousand livres a year,' wrote de

Nivernois to de Praslin, when pressing the Chevalier's claims to greater consideration, 'does not go so far in London as would fifteen thousand livres in Paris. These are but the wages of an ordinary clerk . . . his salary should be more in accordance with the style of living in England, where everything is singularly expensive.' De Praslin was not to be moved, and yet what stronger proof was needed of his sense of the wrongs under which D'Eon was suffering, and of the recognised serious nature of his embarrassments, than is to be found in the singular document supplied to him as protection in France against arrest and detention, at a moment when he was required to proceed to Versailles, with the ratifications to the Treaty of Peace.

*LETTER OF STATE, in favour of the Sieur D'Eon de Beaumont.*

'LOUIS, by the grace of God, King of France and of Navarre, to our well-beloved and trusty Councillors, the bodies holding our Courts of Parliament, the Grand Council, the Court of Aids, ordinary Requests of our House and of our Palaces, Bailiffs, Seneschals, Prevosts, Judges, their Lieutenants, and all other our Officers and Justiciaries whom it may concern, Greeting. Our dear and well-beloved Charles, Geneviève, Louis, Auguste, André, Timothée D'Eon de Beaumont, captain in the regiment of the d'Autichamp dragoons, Censor Royal, and Secretary of our Embassy in England, being at present in London in the performance of the functions of his office, and unable, in consequence, to attend to his own private affairs: We desire and command by these presents, signed with our hand, that all and each of the actions at civil law instituted, or about to be instituted before you, in which he shall appear, whether as plaintiff or as defendant, shall be holden by you, as they are holden by Us, in their present state and in suspension for the space of six months, during which time We very expressly forbid you to have any knowledge thereon, or that you take any proceedings thereon, under pain of nullity, annulment of procedure and of all expenses, damages, indemnities, and interests.

We also desire and require that all processes moved, or about to be moved, in our Council concerning his civil interests, be and remain in suspension for the said term, during which we also forbid his accusers, under the said penalties, to take any proceedings; nevertheless, it is not our intention to derogate in the least degree, by these presents, from the declaration of the twenty-third December, one thousand seven hundred and two, containing general instructions as to Letters of State, and which we require to be observed and executed according to their form and tenour. We command our principal usher or sergeant, upon being required, to issue in execution of these presents all summonses, notification, and other requisite and necessary acts without asking further leave or permission. For such is our pleasure. Given at Versailles, the twenty-second February, in the year of grace one thousand seven hundred and sixty-three, and the forty-eighth of our reign. 'LOUIS.'

'In the King's name. CHOISEUL, DUKE DE PRASLIN.'

Pursued and worried by his creditors at home and abroad, and in despair at the extremities to which he was being reduced, the Chevalier lost all control over himself in his communications with the Foreign Minister, who, he considered, had failed to keep his word.

'You were good enough to hold out hopes of payment being made to me, when I was leaving for Paris with the ratifications to the Treaty of Peace. I have been paying interest for nearly nine years, on the money I borrowed to enable me to serve the King in the extreme north, when nobody dared to go there. . . . The appointment of Minister Plenipotentiary, for which I never asked, has certainly not turned my head, thanks to a little philosophy; it has only involved me in heavier expenses. . . . If the affairs of the King are in a bad state, mine are going from bad to worse. . . . Soon I shall complete ten years' service as a diplomatist, without having become richer or sharper. . . . I have incurred debts to the amount of 20,000 livres for having dabbled in politics. . . . I entreat you to decide upon my present and future prospects, and upon the favours I am to expect from your sense of justice; otherwise, I admit to



you frankly, Monsieur le Duc, it will be impossible to carry on the war at my expense, during a time of peace. . . . If you are not good enough to think of me, I will die of consumption<sup>1</sup> instead of dying of molten grease as was the case with ———. I do not ask to be fattened at the King's expense; I only wish for sufficient flesh to keep body and soul together.'

A friendly note of reproof from his late chief, de Nivernois, for having written so 'churlish' a letter to de Praslin, was met by D'Eon's regret that his 'churlish' letter had given cause for vexation. The truths he exposed, and the integrity of his demands, were not intended to vex two just and enlightened ministers. . . . He respectfully demanded justice of a minister he respected . . . he respected the minister's economy that refused to pay his debts, but he respected much more his justice that should pay them. So soon as he received the money, he would become as meek as a paschal lamb.

'If you are curious to know,' continued the Chevalier, 'what is passing in this country, the accounts are too long to repeat here, see my letters to the Duke de Praslin, and if you can then say I am an idle fellow, I will ask nothing more of the minister. When one serves the King well, one should at least have the wherewithal to meet the little liabilities incurred in unbounded zeal for his service.'<sup>2</sup>

'D'EON,  
'*Ne variatur.*'

<sup>1</sup> De Praslin, who was exceedingly lean, took a great dislike to fat people. The first time he saw Favier, secretary to the Count de Broglio, a man of stout proportions, he said, 'You appear to me to be a worthless fellow, for you are very fat.' This fat and a good appetite was the cause of all that worthy man's misfortunes at the hands of Praslin. . . . The best thing he can do to recover the good graces of the duke is to die of consumption. Note by D'Eon. See Boutaric, for de Praslin's persecutions of this man.

<sup>2</sup> The Duke de Nivernois Correspondence. *Lett. Mém. &c.*

## CHAPTER VI.

D'Eon charged with extravagance at the Embassy.—Irritating correspondence—Influx of French visitors—Odious proposal to D'Eon—Is to return to subordinate duties on being superseded—His remonstrances—The Earl of Hertford—The Count de Guerchy's arrival in England, and D'Eon's letters of recall—Secret despatch from Louis XV.—Official recall on the plea of mental alienation—Disregard of the ministerial orders.

SIMULTANEOUSLY with the griefs that were being so vigorously laid before de Praslin, the Chevalier was indulging in a brisk interchange of letters with de Guerchy, in which he vindicated himself with no little dexterity against the charges of wanton extravagance as host at the embassy in London, for the general maintenance of which the count was solely responsible, the liberal allowance of a minister at one of the first Courts in Europe being enjoyed by him, though only ambassador *in petto*, and not by the minister plenipotentiary *in situ*. The spirit of satire and sarcasm in which D'Eon had latterly indited his letters to both those ministers was more than either could bear with; but, forgetting their dignity in the face of what, after all, was gross insubordination, they gave way to a feeling of resentment, the former in admonitions and threats, after receipt of the 'churlish' note; the latter, by being offensive and insulting, and persisting in peevish and unbecoming lamentations on the frequent requisitions to which his pocket was subjected. We cannot undertake to reproduce in full the mutual recriminations, brimming with scorn, that brought to a close the un-

seemly paper war which irrevocably sealed the fate of the Chevalier D'Eon ; but we must at least find room for a few of the ugly things that were said by the strong, as well as by him who was on the defensive, and whom they were deliberately luring to his destruction.

*The Duke de Praslin to the Chevalier D'Eon.*

‘Paris, September 17, 1763.

‘Sir,—I never could have believed that the title of Minister Plenipotentiary would cause you so quickly to forget the point whence you have started, and I had no reason to expect that your aspirations would increase in proportion as you received new favours. . . . I cannot conceive the necessity for the extraordinary outlay at the expense of the Count de Guerchy, and which is quite out of place. I do not conceal from you my displeasure at your having involved in so great expenditure one to whom I am attached, and in whom I take such an interest, and who trusted in you on my recommendation. . . . I hope that you will take better care of other people’s money for the future, and that you will endeavour to be as useful to him as you have been to the Duke de Nivernois, &c. &c.’

This and much more was irritating matter enough, and might perhaps have been borne with patience by the Chevalier ; but one other paragraph there was which placidly gave him the lie, and banished all hopes of relief out of his financial difficulties, so long as de Praslin remained at the Foreign Ministry.

‘I gave you no reason to expect the reimbursement of your former journey to Russia, because three of my predecessors upon whom you made a similar demand had not, it appeared, found it legitimate.’

It was not in D'Eon’s nature to receive this prevaricating statement with composure. He was not sufficiently cool-headed to make a perfectly good

courtier. Smarting under insult and what he considered undeserved injury, he relieved his agitated mind in emphatic language such as this :—

‘London, September 25, 1763.

‘I received, the day before yesterday, the private letter you did me the honour to write to me on the 17th inst. ; I can only look upon it as a Testament *ab irato*.<sup>1</sup> *The point whence I started*, when very young, was my native town, Tonnerre, where I have a small property and a house fully six times larger than that occupied in London by the Duke de Nivernois. *The point whence I started*, in 1756, was the Hôtel d’Ons-en-Bray, Rue de Bourbon, Faubourg St. Germain. I am the friend of the owner of that mansion, and I left him, against his will, to make three journeys to Russia and to other Courts in Europe, to join the army, to come to England, to bring four or five treaties to Versailles, not as a courier, but as a man who had contributed to the framing of them. I have frequently travelled although sick to death, and upon one occasion with a broken leg ; nevertheless, I am prepared to return to *the point whence I started*, if such be my fate. I can only certify, as a geometrician, that all points proceed from and should meet in a common centre. *The points whence I started* are those of being a gentleman, a soldier, and a secretary of embassy ; all so many *points* which naturally lead to becoming a minister at foreign courts. The first gives a claim, the second strengthens consciousness and endues with the necessary firmness for such a post, but the third is the school for it. I acquitted myself so creditably in the latter, according to your own judgment, Monsieur le Duc, as to merit reward. . . . But whatever may have been *the point whence I started*, the King, my master, having chosen me to represent him, I should have forgotten everything, and kept in sight only the *point* I have reached. This is my rule of right, and you will remind me of it if I forget it. . . . I venture to assure you, that you were good enough to promise that you would again inquire into the matter of my first journey to

<sup>1</sup> A Testament *ab irato* is one drawn up under the influence of choler ; it is not only null and void according to custom and written law, but it is rescinded and destroyed in the Parliament of Paris. Note by D'Eon.

Russia, and that you should do me justice. . . . At Vienna you told me that were you minister I should very soon be paid . . . you repeated your promise the last time I had the honour of dining with you at Versailles . . . the Duchess was present. . . . I reminded you that I had been paying interest for nearly nine<sup>1</sup> years on 10,000 livres borrowed for my first Muscovite journey. The Duchess' heart was touched, and she said to you : " Really you should see that poor M. D'Eon, who has served his King so well, is paid." You, also, were touched, and kindly replied : " I will make inquiries. I should be very glad to see that he is paid, but how is it to be done ! " That same evening I left for England, and have remained crushed ever since under the burden of my debts. . . . It is no proof that my claims are groundless, because your predecessors failed to do me justice. They succeeded each other in office with such rapidity, as rarely to have had time to inquire into the many matters on hand, and it is precisely because they failed in their justice towards me, that I seek it at your hands. . . . Whether you be pleased or displeased, Monsieur le Duc, I will respectfully continue to appeal to your sense of justice . . . and I will not cease to serve the King with my wonted zeal. . . . I respect your economy which is not disposed to pay my debts, but I have greater regard for your justice, which should pay them . . . for mercy's sake let me be paid my first expenses to Russia, that I may satisfy my creditors . . . ;' then, defending himself against the charge of extravagance, he says : ' Life and style of living in Paris is very different to what both are in London . . . my accounts should be seen and examined. . . . I defy any housekeeper to find in my accounts a single item of useless expenditure of fifteen or twenty guineas throughout. . . . I have never been at the head of any house except that of my father, and in a twelvemonth it came to grief. . . . If you desire to know me, Monsieur le Duc, I tell you frankly that I am of use only for thinking, imagining, questioning, reflecting, comparing, reading, writing, or to run from east to west, from north to south, to fight on hill and dale. Had I lived in the time of Alexander or of Don Quixote, I should certainly have been Parmenion or Sancho

<sup>1</sup> ' Eight ' in 4to. and 8vo. editions of *Lett. Mém.* &c. ; altered by D'Eon to ' nine.' Ch. MSS.

Panza. If you remove me out of my element, I will squander the entire revenue of France in the course of a twelvemonth without committing a single folly, and afterwards present you with an able treatise on economy. . . .'

One extract, I think, suffices as an illustration of the general character of de Guerchy's letters to D'Eon:—

'Jouy, September 4, 1763.

' . . . The Duke de Nivernois informs me that he has lately written to you on the subject of your communication, having reference to the position to which chance has called you, and to your wishes therewith so soon as I shall have arrived in London. . . . I have shown the accounts you have sent to the Duke de Praslin . . . we find the expenditure excessive, the half of my emoluments having been consumed . . . nobody here expects you to keep up any state. . . . I do not approve of the numerous gratuities with which I am charged, and do not hold myself responsible for them. . . .'

*D'Eon's Reply.*

'London, September 25, 1763.

' . . . I take the liberty of observing to you on the subject of *the position to which chance has called me*, that Solomon said a long time ago—everything here below was chance, opportunity, good luck, happiness, and misfortune, and that I am more than ever persuaded Solomon was a great preacher. I will modestly add that *the chance* which gave the title of minister plenipotentiary to a man who has negotiated successfully during the past ten years, was in probability not one of the most mistaken. What has come to me by *chance* might come to another by *good luck*. He who becomes a minister or ambassador by *chance* can never countenance arrangements repugnant to himself, without giving but a poor idea of his heart and mind. . . . I am sorry that the expenditure should seem heavy, but it has been indispensable. . . . I appeal to ample written testimony to this effect . . . there is a large staff here to be paid and boarded at the expense of the coming ambassador . . . the *chance* which created me a minister should have been at the same time charitable enough

to guarantee to me some kind of condition, because a minister who keeps no state is a being that has never existed. . . . I have been obliged to assume to myself certain state, just as all bodies take position according to respective gravitation. Not feeling the least remorse, I must be proof against reproach. . . . A man, no matter who, can only form an estimate of himself, even so far as his opinion goes, by comparing himself to one or more other men. There are several proverbs which serve to prove the truth of this. It is commonly said: *He is as stupid as any thousand—he is as wicked as any four—he is as shabby as any ten—men.* This is the only scale by which we can be guided, except in certain cases where men measure themselves by women. An ambassador, no matter who, may be worth half a man, a whole man, twenty, a thousand, or ten thousand men. It is necessary to determine how a minister plenipotentiary, who is a captain of dragoons, and has completed ten political campaigns (without counting campaigns in the field), stands relatively to an ambassador who is a lieutenant-general, and is making his *début*. Admitting proportions to be one to ten, the assessment would always be in favour of the minister plenipotentiary, papers being at hand, C.Q.F.D. Everybody will understand that domestics, horses, and secretaries have consumed and continue to consume the same amount of food under the management of the Plenipotentiary D'Eon as under that of the Duke de Nivernois. They have remained ever since under the same sky and with an equally good appetite. . . . There are occasions upon which gratuities must be distributed. . . . I had to do so on delivering my credentials, first as resident, then as minister plenipotentiary—on the King's birthday, the day the Queen gave birth to Prince Frederick, and on the anniversary of the King's coronation. You must give people something, otherwise they refuse to leave the door, make an abominable row, and end with obscene dances. Happily, I am a bachelor; but you will have to see to this when you arrive. . . .'

In another letter to de Guerchy, the Chevalier writes:—

'I dined with Lord Hertford to-day and met the diplomatic corps, Lords Sandwich and March, and several other noblemen.

. . . Yesterday, the day of St. Louis, Lords Hertford and March did me the honour to call at the embassy with several illustrious Scotsmen, amongst them David Hume, who will ever be the ornament and glory of his country. Some members of the diplomatic corps had thought proper to tell me that they would call at the French Embassy to celebrate the day of St. Louis. I did not invite, I did not refuse to receive them, and I gave no extraordinary reception. If the minister finds fault with this, I am not to blame. . . . I could not have acted otherwise.'

Unyielding as the Duke de Broglie shows himself to be in his general condemnation of D'Eon, we find him admitting<sup>1</sup> that French persons of distinction abounded in London during several months after the re-establishment of peace, all eager to visit the country so little known and until then so little understood, and whose customs and literature had only just been brought into fashion by Voltaire and Montesquieu. It became the rage, as sometimes happens with society in Paris; and the idea that they were rendering homage to conquerors did not restrain any of the generation of that day, more interested in political and philosophical innovations than in national honour. The Countess de Boufflers<sup>2</sup> had given the signal, arriving with a number of literary people in her train.

'I was obliged,' again wrote D'Eon, 'to acquit myself of my duty to the Countess de Boufflers, a thousand times more of a philosopher and more learned than I am, and quite a match for any academician; as well as to other persons of quality in London, without including Duclos, de la Condamine, Le Camus, Lalande, &c.'

Mistrustful, too, of the Chevalier's veracity, the Duke

<sup>1</sup> De Broglie, ii. 122.

<sup>2</sup> The mistress of the Prince de Conti, and aspiring to be his wife. Walpole describes her as being an Anglomane.



de Broglie informs his readers that until he had seen the original letter to de Guerchy, dated September 25, in the official archives, he could not believe in the authenticity of the copy published by D'Eon himself in his 'Lettres, Mémoires et Négotiations Particulières,' the work to which we are frequently having recourse. The duke's, and our own readers, will perhaps feel inclined to sympathise with his grace's amazement at D'Eon's audacity in holding such language towards his superiors, until they learn the vantage afforded by a vitiated and unscrupulous minister, when he again insulted the Chevalier by seeking his co-operation in an odious and dishonourable transaction. De Guerchy's complaints of the Chevalier's extravagance as his *locum tenens* became so loud and frequent that an idea—a most foul idea—was conceived by de Praslin for making good the supposed losses sustained by his old friend. Incredible as it appeared at the time, de Nivernois lent something more than his countenance in support, for it was he who first proposed it to D'Eon. His letter bore three dates, September 9, 10 and 11, which the Chevalier interpreted by saying that the late ambassador's hand had refused its office twice, even his ink-horn had shrunk from him, until at last his noble heart had humbled itself to please old friends—the minister and ambassador.

' . . . Give me leave to tell you, my dear friend,' wrote de Nivernois after a three days' struggle with his conscience, ' that you are wrong in dissipating nearly one-half of M. de Guerchy's monthly allowances. But it is not enough to find fault, we must appeal to facts and find a remedy. . . . I think that a gratuity, be it in your name or in that of M. de Guerchy, but in either case for his benefit, will serve to fill up the gap made by your dinners, and nothing more will be said on the matter. . . . ' 'There are remedies that are worse than the disease,'

was the Chevalier's reply, also of September 25: 'Are not those you propose, Monsieur le Duc, of this kind? . . . *application to be made to the King for a gratuity in my behalf, but which is to be for the benefit of another man's pocket!* I could not conscientiously agree to such an expedient, unless I were furnished with a duly legalised receipt; for I am a man of order, and think it preferable to leave open the gap made by my dinners rather than to stop it up with such a plug. . . . I will never consent to the King being asked for a gratuity in my name for the benefit of another. . . .'

So far as the Chevalier was personally concerned, he felt that all he had to reproach in the Duke de Nivernois was the Italian shrewdness of his great-uncle the Cardinal Mazarin, and the extreme weakness and tenderness of his poor nerves and understanding. He thought the duke must have been endowed to a marvellous extent with a natural fund of honesty, for it was a wonderful fact that, although he had been the friend of three illustrious rascals during the past thirty years, the purity of his soul had never become contaminated by so long and so close a friendship, by so foul and unnatural an alliance. The astounding virtue of the amiable duke reminded him of that of St. Ives. *Sanctus Ivo erat advocatus et non latro. O res miranda!*<sup>1</sup>

One other mortification, the climax to the persecution he was undergoing, the Chevalier was about to endure, and when we shall have become acquainted with it, there will no longer be room for surprise at the bold and unflinching attitude he had been assuming, and at the factious spirit in which he had been addressing his superiors.

When the Chevalier's credentials as Resident reached England, de Nivernois, perceiving that his *protégé's* mission was to end with the appearance of a new am-

<sup>1</sup> Ch. MSS. 977.

bassador, took occasion to express himself in unmistakable terms to de Praslin on the unfairness of the arrangement, and urged, considering the past valuable services of his secretary and the conditions upon which he had accepted his appointment the preceding autumn, that promotion, to which he was fully entitled, should be permanent. Never ceasing to concern himself in all that related to 'his little D'Eon,' de Nivernois, although no longer ambassador, continued his exertions long after returning to France, with the success only of receiving intimation from the minister that the Chevalier was shortly to become minister plenipotentiary, when he should have to abandon his old claim to travelling expenses in Russia; but that upon de Guerchy's arrival he must return to his duties as secretary of Embassy. Whatever the occasion, however, of the ambassador's absence from his post in the future, D'Eon should be left in charge with the temporary rank of resident; and this was all he could expect. Feeling how unpalatable such news would be, de Nivernois earnestly recommended the Chevalier to accept the situation and hope for better days. It was true that in again becoming secretary after having been minister plenipotentiary, he was descending from a bishopric to become a miller, but millers who had been bishops were not to be found by the dozen! He warned him against further disposition to rebel, repeating what he had already said more than once: 'I know the man with whom you will have to deal'—an opinion of de Guerchy much of the same substance as that expressed by the Count de Broglio.

It was very singular, thought the Chevalier, that when engaged in war he was at peace with everybody, but since he had toiled at the re-establishment of peace, he seemed to be at war with everybody.

*The Chevalier D'Eon to the Duke de Nivernois*

‘ August 1, 1763.

‘ . . . This is a difficult and an impossible negotiation, and when I had the honour to tell you that I considered the rank of Minister Plenipotentiary to be a misfortune, rather than a benefit, I was right. I never sought the title nor did I wish for it. It was bestowed upon me, and having been obliged to assume it, I cannot again become a secretary, then minister, again secretary, and so on. . . . I should be a general laughing-stock, and no longer in a position to serve the King usefully. . . . Should my letters of recall not be sent, and I am permitted to retain my title, without, however, discharging the office except at certain intervals, I shall remain and cheerfully do my duty under the Count de Guerchy’s orders, and the Duke de Praslin may allot any such salary as he thinks proper. *I am tractable as regards money, but intractable on points of honour.* . . . I have made every effort to please you, the Duke de Praslin and the Count de Guerchy, and after mature reflection and having well weighed every circumstance, I cannot but be persuaded that what is demanded of me is an impossibility and not in my power to agree to, without compromising the dignity of the King, a matter of great moment to me, and without compromising the title of Minister Plenipotentiary. . . . I shall certainly serve the Count de Guerchy with zeal and attachment equal to that I entertain towards the Duke de Nivernois, because when I serve, I do not say with the priests, *ad utilitatem quoque nostram*. I serve solely for honour and for the greater glory of the King. . . . My heart is deeply touched at the trouble you have been kind enough to take, and at the advice you give . . . your counsels may be useful at Versailles, but suffer me to say that they will not do in London.’

D'Eon further informed the duke that his loins were not sufficiently supple to enable him to vault politically, at one time on the mule of a bishop, at another on the ass of a miller !

Without seeking to justify the Chevalier’s conduct

in addressing such flippant letters to his superiors, even to those he loved so well, some indulgence may be claimed under provocation of no ordinary character. His pension, ever in arrear, was irregularly paid ; his salary as resident was fixed at the inadequate sum of 12,000 livres, and he was to live at the charge of the ambassador, whose pocket, by desire of de Praslin and de Nivernois, should be spared to the utmost, and for whose sole benefit a gratuity was to be obtained from the King, by a fraud in which it was expected he would connive. It was too true that de Guerchy was totally unfitted for the high office he had been called upon to fill, but 'little D'Eon, experienced, zealous, and useful,' would be retained to do the work, and steer the count clear of all eventual troubles ; not, however, with the title of minister or resident, to which he had been raised, but as secretary of Embassy, to which he would have to descend, resuming the former rank at such times only as the ambassador might be absent from his post. 'Little D'Eon, an easy, good-natured fellow,' would have peaceably resigned himself almost to any arrangement in accordance with the pleasure of ministers ; but the prospect of degradation to secretary, at the same Court at which he had become plenipotentiary, was more than his proud spirit could bear. This was the open wound that never healed. . . . He had been directed by the King to receive his instructions from Tercier as if they came from himself ; he accordingly wrote to Tercier for guidance, received expressions of sympathy and confessions of indignation, and being supported by further secret orders from his sovereign, he determined on his course of action.

For several months past an ambassador to France had been talked about, and so early as April 14, D'Eon

had intimated to de Guerchy that it was commonly believed Lord Hertford would be named, accompanying the information, as was his custom, with a sketch of that nobleman. The earl was a Knight of the Garter, the father of six sons and six daughters all living, without counting those to come, for her ladyship was still young and in an interesting condition. His lordship spoke French well, and was just the man to preserve the peace so happily arranged between the two nations. He was a very courteous and amiable man, and of the same illustrious family as the beautiful Seymour, one of the empty-headed wives of a heartless king—he alluded to Henry VIII.<sup>1</sup>

The official notification of the Earl of Hertford's appointment, September 29, as ambassador to the Court of France, was quickly followed by the official nomination, October 3, of the Count de Guerchy. Speaking of the new minister, George III. asked the French plenipotentiary if he was a good officer as general of infantry, to which D'Eon replied that he was so good as never to have harmed anybody, and although a general of infantry he considered him better qualified to command cavalry, because at the battle of Minden he recommended the cavalry to be placed in the centre and infantry on the wings. De Guerchy arrived in London on October 17, and put up at Lord Holland's. The Chevalier hastened to wait upon his new chief, and the two men stood face to face, not for the first time in their lives, de Guerchy at once betraying the spirit by which he was animated, in expressing his surprise at D'Eon not being present when he alighted from his coach, and then asking whether he did not regret having written to him his letter of September 25. 'No, sir, and were you to

<sup>1</sup> *Lett. Mém. &c. i.*

write me such another letter as that of September 4, from Jouy, I should be obliged to send you a similar reply.' De Guerchy added that he should preserve the original as long as he lived; to which D'Eon replied that if he feared to lose it he begged to offer copies in quadruplicate, with his own attestation *ne variatur!* And so ended the first interview in England between these two men, whose malignant hatred of each other was not even swallowed up in death.

In the course of the evening, de Guerchy informed D'Eon that he had brought his letters of recall. 'A la bonheur (*sic*), Monsieur le Comte!' said the latter. 'I will call for them in the morning, and at the same time hand over all papers likely to be of consequence to you.' The following day, after de Guerchy had received the Embassy archives and assumed official charge, the Chevalier demanded his letters of recall. The ambassador, strangely agitated, searched drawers, portfolios, and elsewhere, and finding them at last in his pocket, gave them to D'Eon, at whose quiet acceptance of them he seemed disconcerted. D'Eon believed that the pretended search was to give him time to make some kind of apology for the past.

*The Duke de Praslin to the Chevalier D'Eon.*

'Versailles, October 4, 1763.

'Sir,—The arrival of the King's ambassador putting an end to the commission entrusted to you by his Majesty as his Minister Plenipotentiary, I send to you your letters of recall, which you will deliver to his Britannic Majesty according to custom, and with the least possible delay. You will herewith find a copy of that letter. You will quit London immediately after your audience, and you will at once proceed to Paris, whence you will report your arrival, and where you will await my instructions without coming to Court.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *France Correspondence*, Public Record Office.

The Chevalier was recalled, and yet expressly forbidden to appear at Court! There was apprehension lest he should bring to light the iniquities of which he was the victim! He was greatly moved at the contents of this letter, for even the despatch he had received some days previously, through the hands of a secret courier, had scarcely prepared him for so overwhelming a blow.

*To the Chevalier D'Eon, my Minister Plenipotentiary, London.*

‘Versailles, October 4, 1763.

‘You have served me as usefully in the guise of a female as in the dress you now wear. Reassume it immediately, and withdraw into the city. I warn you that the King has this day signed, not with his hand, but with the stamp, the order to compel you to return to France; but I command you to remain in England, with all your papers, until such time as you receive further instructions from me. You are not in safety at your residence, and here you will find powerful enemies.’<sup>1</sup>

‘LOUIS.’

‘I have frequently heard the Chevalier D'Eon repeat to my father,’ says Madame Campan, ‘the contents of this letter, in which Louis XV. thus separated his individuality from the person of the King of France. The Chevalier or Chevalière had kept all the King's letters . . .’<sup>2</sup> yet the Duke de Broglie refuses to acknowledge its authenticity, and labours to prove that it is an imposture.<sup>3</sup>

No sooner had the Chevalier read de Praslin's letter than it fell from his hands. He began to suspect, for the first time, the evils that menaced him. What was he to hope from the strength of character of a monarch who deserted him when he had done nothing

<sup>1</sup> Autograph letter. Boutaric, i. 298.

<sup>2</sup> Campan, i. 100.

<sup>3</sup> De Broglie, ii. 130.



but obey his commands, and whose only exhibition of courage consisted in signing away his downfall with the stamp instead of with the sign-manual. Unable to adopt and digest the idea that the King would submit himself to the will of others, and sacrifice one who was dear to him and whom he supported in secret, the Chevalier concluded that the affixing of a stamped signature could only have been an act of momentary weakness, a concession to temporary necessities, and he felt that he should be the more surely justified, from having been so unjustly condemned. Reflections such as these gave him courage and hope; he resumed his habitual gaiety, his usual indifference, and resolved upon adhering to all the King's instructions, whatever the damaging situations in which they might place him. He did not, however, resign himself to this sort of humiliation without a struggle, being specially sensitive on points of honour and self-esteem, feelings to which he was prone, and which were readily excited within him. . . . He awaited his enemies with resignation, having made up his mind to yield, step by step, inch by inch, and make them pay dearly for a triumph he some day hoped to avenge.<sup>1</sup>

It had become de Praslin's object to crush the Chevalier, first by degrading him, then seizing his person, when he would have thrown him in all probability into the Bastille. To effect this, he showed D'Eon's two letters of September 25 to the King—the one to himself, the other to de Guerchy—and maintained that both sufficiently betrayed aberration of mind in the plenipotentiary, who could not possibly continue at a foreign court. It was under pressure such as this that Louis XV., feigning to believe in the

<sup>1</sup> D'Eon MSS. Gaill. 128.

imputation, suffered the despatch of the letter of recall, signed, not with his hand, but with the stamp.

*Louis XV. to George III.*

'Sir, my Brother,—The arrival of the Count de Guerchy, my ambassador at your Court, causing the functions of my Minister Plenipotentiary to cease, I do not delay to divest him of his office, and to require his immediate presence in France; but as he is not in a condition to present his letters of recall, in person, I instruct the Count de Guerchy to deliver them to you, and to renew to you upon this occasion the assurances of the inviolable friendship with which you have inspired me, and of my sincere desire to render it for ever durable.<sup>1</sup>

'I am Sir, my Brother,

'Your good Brother,

'LOUIS.'

'Fontainebleau, October 3, 1763.'

'Instead of bringing the Chevalier to trial and proving his guilt, de Praslin contented himself by causing forged letters of recall to be presented to the King of England by the Count de Guerchy. There was nothing in this to manifest the majesty of ministerial justice—it was the feeble apology of a desperate cause.'<sup>2</sup>

It was enough for the Chevalier to have learnt from the King himself that his letters of recall were not signed with the sign-manual; he felt assured that his Majesty could not be prevailed upon to sign away, with his own hand, his perdition, whilst want of firmness and feebleness of character had precluded him from fairly interposing in the action of his minister, and he refused to recognise the authenticity of the document.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *France Correspondence*, Public Record Office.

<sup>2</sup> Ch. MSS. 782.

<sup>3</sup> 'You will see by my letter of yesterday that I was aware of the Sieur D'Eon's recall. . . .'—Louis XV. to Tercier, October 12, 1763. Boutaric, i. 290. It seems clear enough that the order of recall did not originate with the King. How just were the Chevalier's conclusions!

‘ My letters of recall in the form of disgrace,’ he wrote, ‘ not having been preceded on the part of the Duke de Praslin by necessary investigation, inquiry, or complete knowledge of all circumstances, whence the decision may be imputed to his own free act and will, are manifestly obreptitious, void, and of no effect. A decision of so great gravity would never have prevailed if truth, in seeking to approach the throne, had not been checked by innumerable obstacles. To have the right to persecute, one should be in the right, and to be in the right, it is sufficient not to be in the wrong. Ministers, like priests, are never in the wrong, and especially when they are strong enough to prove that they are in the right. Pompadour, who imagined that Louis XV. was unable to think, without her permission—those great ministers at Versailles who fancied that the King could do nothing without them, would be greatly astonished were I to prove to them, as clearly as is the light of the sun, and in the King’s own handwriting, that he mistrusted them all as he would a band of robbers ; that he avoided them as he would a body of spies ; and wishing to enjoy a little domestic peace, he allowed them to go the way of their own follies, for which he would afterwards try to make amends secretly. He had a hundred times more esteem, friendship, and real confidence in the intelligence, wisdom, and probity of the Count de Broglie, and in the valiant qualities of his little D’Eon, than in the whole of his mistresses and ministers put together, the majority of whom he kept about him from the same force of habit, largeness of heart, and regal grandeur, which induced him to keep other strange animals in his menagerie. When, under a despotic monarch, ministers and other great people at Court are corrupt and of prejudiced minds, no other alternative is left to oppressed innocence than an appeal to the King and to God. Under a republic, it is possible to appeal to God, to the people and to the sword ; this last appeal being frequently attended with success, when battalions are strong, well disciplined, and artillery is well served.’<sup>1</sup>

Had D’Eon gone on to state how injured innocence was to reach a despotic monarch, his experience would

<sup>1</sup> Ch. MSS. 780, 760, 946.

have been of service to many, even in this the last but one decade of the nineteenth century ; for the absolutism of his adored master, his Most Christian Majesty Louis XV., is not to be compared to that of one Christian ruler of these our times, the Imperial ruler, who, whatever the disposition of his heart, is condemned by tradition and long custom to spend his days in lonely grandeur, invisible and unapproachable to all but one or two dissembling and unfaithful ministers, too often shunned by even his nearest relatives, and therefore unjustly mistrusted and despised by his subjects of every class.

## CHAPTER VII.

D'Eon's interview with the Earl of Halifax—Refuses to surrender the King's papers to de Guerchy—Declines to take leave of the King of England—A scene at the French Embassy—Another at Lord Halifax's residence—A third at D'Eon's—Summoned by a magistrate—De Guerchy's hostile measures—D'Eon is dangerously drugged at the table of the French ambassador—Designs against his liberty—Removes to Brewer Street, Golden Square—Childishly annoyed—His extradition demanded—Warned to that effect by Louis XV.

WITH his usual alacrity and wariness in anticipating difficulties, by strengthening the position into which he sometimes fancied he was forced by chance, the Chevalier took occasion to represent to Lord Halifax, at a special interview for which he had asked, that he could not consider his letters of recall as authentic. In the first place, they had been brought by the Count de Guerchy, which was absolutely contrary to all precedent, and in these letters he was styled, simply, Minister Plenipotentiary, the titles of Knight of the Order of Saint Louis and Captain of Dragoons being omitted, although they appeared in his credentials; and what was of most importance, they were not signed with the King's own hand. Lord Halifax expressed surprise at these informalities, and said that any English minister rash enough to make use of the King's signature under similar circumstances would be doing so at the risk of his head; the King of England signed with his own hand all letters to foreign princes, and all special instructions to his ministers. Such an expression of opinion was exactly what the Chevalier wanted.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ch. MSS.

The Embassy archives received by de Guerchy were contained in the same four despatch-boxes in which they had been delivered to D'Eon by de Nivernois, and consisted only of the official cypher and ordinary correspondence; but on taking leave of Madame de Pompadour and the Minister for Foreign Affairs, de Guerchy had engaged to secure, not only the Chevalier's person, but every scrap of paper in his possession. Failing to obtain them coaxingly, he imperiously demanded, in the many angry altercations on the subject, that all the documents which had passed into his hands during his term of office, should be immediately and unconditionally given up! D'Eon quietly persisted in his refusal to surrender all such other papers as he conceived he had a right to retain, unless he received orders to the contrary *direct from the King*, and on October 23 he furnished the ambassador with this decision in writing.

The nature of the papers they coveted was a mystery to de Pompadour, de Praslin, and de Guerchy, except that it was believed they incriminated D'Eon in a correspondence with the proscribed de Broglies. Such would certainly have been the case, but they also included the detailed plans for an invasion of England, contemplated, as we are aware, and being completed during the few months that had transpired since the treaty of peace had been signed.

Finding D'Eon intractable and resolute, de Guerchy was urgent in requiring him to present his letters of recall and return to France with the least possible delay; and meaning to hasten his departure, he requested the Secretary of State to obtain an audience for the minister plenipotentiary on the earliest day possible. The following communication was the result:—

'Lord Halifax presents his compliments to the Chevalier D'Eon, and has the honour to inform him that, in consequence of unforeseen pressure of business, it will be more convenient to the King to grant an audience to M. D'Eon to-morrow, Wednesday, than on Friday next.'

'St. James', October 25, 1763.'

'This note is a sufficiently genuine proof,' wrote D'Eon a few months later, 'that my presence at this Court was a terrible burden on the shoulders of M. de Guerchy. We are in the month of February, 1764, and I have not yet had my audience for taking leave. . . . Judging by appearances, M. de Guerchy will show the example. . . . The English minister wrote to me on October 25, and on the 24th I had received from the Duke de Choiseul a letter of the 18th of the same month, that is to say, fourteen days later than the date of the pretended letter of recall, in which I received fresh assurances of the satisfaction, at Court, with the manner in which I performed my duties, and requiring me to continue my correspondence. On that same day, the 24th, I received another letter, dated October 15, that is to say, eleven days after the doubtful letter of recall, in which the Controller-General entrusted me, in the King's name, with fresh work. . . . Lord Halifax's note might have influenced me to comply with Guerchy's wishes, had I not believed it to be my duty to remain inflexible to his entreaties.'

<sup>1</sup>

D'Eon declined the Secretary of State's invitation to take leave of the King on the 26th, but he attended his Majesty's levée on that day, and a dinner party in the evening at Lord Halifax's, where the company included Mr. Grenville, the Prime Minister, Lord Sandwich, and others, and several foreign representatives. Scarcely had he entered the room at Lord Halifax's, than de Guerchy, advancing rapidly towards him, asked why he had not taken leave of the King at the appointed audience. The Chevalier made his usual laconic reply: 'Because I am awaiting further instruc-

<sup>1</sup> *Lett. Mém.*, &c. xxxiii. MS. notes.

tions,' which led to an agitated and unseemly disputation, until D'Eon brought it to a close by addressing himself to the three English ministers who happened to be conversing together. 'The Count de Guerchy forces me to the honour of declaring to your Excellencies, that I do not take leave at any audience, because I am awaiting further instructions,' which little speech 'de Guerchy confessed he was quite unable to comprehend, being himself a novice in diplomatic matters.' Lord Halifax showing some inclination to take de Guerchy's part, D'Eon drew from his pocket the invitation to dinner he had received, and said to his lordship: 'Your Excellency has invited the minister plenipotentiary to dinner; I entreat that it be not delayed. It is late, and personally, I wish to avail myself peaceably of the honour you have done me. I do not come here to excite a disturbance but to bring peace.' For such bold words as these, Lord Halifax, who as yet knew but little of D'Eon, was scarcely prepared; but they sufficed to put him on his guard, as the sequel will show, for he was beginning to discover that he had to do with a somewhat strange, perhaps violent, and at any rate very singular character.

There called at the French Embassy one day in August, a tall, lean Frenchman, who announced himself as M. Treyssac de Vergy, a great friend of the Duke de Praslin and the Count de Guerchy, and other French ministers, and as having come to England to visit a country of which so little was known. The Chevalier D'Eon received him politely, but reminded him that it was customary to bring letters of introduction to a minister, and hoped that he would make it his business to do so; to which de Vergy replied that he did not consider such letters at all necessary from his being



on terms of great intimacy with the Count de Guerchy, whom he had met at supper at the house of the Marquises de Villeroy, de Lirré, &c., and who was sure to embrace him on both cheeks the next time they met. He repeated his calls, still without producing any letters, until the Chevalier gave him clearly to understand, in the presence of several members of the Embassy, that he should have to refuse him admittance if he again made his appearance without some kind of recommendation.

On October 23 the Chevalier dined with de Guerchy, and in the course of the evening M. de Vergy was announced. The Countess de Guerchy asked D'Eon, aside, if he knew him. 'No, Madame, but I have my suspicions about him.' 'Hush! M. D'Eon; pray do not speak so loud.' De Guerchy then inquired of D'Eon if he was acquainted with de Vergy. 'No, Monsieur le Comte, and I have already informed him that he must bring letters of recommendation.' Then, turning to de Vergy, he said: 'Here is the Count de Guerchy who you know so well, and with whom you have supped at the Marquise de Villeroy's. I do not see that he flies to embrace you.' An awkward silence of some moments was broken by de Guerchy: 'Monsieur de Vergy, I do not know you at all, nor have I met you at supper at the Marquise de Villeroy's, although I have the honour of knowing that lady, and have frequently supped at her house.' Foolish de Guerchy! How dearly this utterance cost him, so untrue was it. De Vergy fixed his eyes steadily on the ambassador, made a profound obeisance, and said: 'I beg your Excellency's pardon, I thought I had the honour of being acquainted with you.' Then, turning to D'Eon: 'I have heard it said that you were a polite man; there

never was a greater mistake. *You do not know, M. D'Eon, the fate that awaits you in France.*' These last words he repeated a second time. The Chevalier, who was a perfect stranger to de Vergy's business in England, took the latter by the arm. 'My politeness does not extend to lying in behalf of others. I do not give you the lie, because you do not know what it is to tell the truth. . . . I have nothing with which to reproach myself, and am by no means anxious as regards my fate, in France or elsewhere. . . . Were we not in the presence of the ambassador and of his lady, I should very soon prove to you that I am not afraid of your threats.' Other visitors being announced, the ambassador authoritatively put an end to the altercation, and to D'Eon's great surprise, de Vergy was permitted to spend the evening in the general company.

On the morning of the 26th, whilst the Chevalier was absent from home attending the King's levée, de Vergy called at his residence in Dover Street, and being informed, in answer to his inquiries, that D'Eon was always at home at nine o'clock, left word that he should call at that hour the following day, fully expecting to find him in. D'Eon took in the significance of this message, and in the evening, after dinner at Lord Halifax's, he privately related to his lordship the whole of the de Vergy incidents, and the challenge openly left at his house that morning. For once, the Chevalier neglected his measures of prudence. Lord Halifax had scarcely time to forget the mild reproof D'Eon found the courage to administer to him that evening, before being unconcernedly told of an intended breach of the peace by one in whose own country duelling was forbidden under pain of death.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> No authorised duel had taken place in France since the reign of Henri II.,

Lord Halifax thanked the plenipotentiary for the information he had communicated, and shortly invited the French ambassador into another room, where they remained closeted for some minutes, and on coming out again the two joined Mr. Grenville and Lord Sandwich in close conversation. Lord Halifax then asked the Chevalier to abandon his intention of meeting de Vergy. 'I have no intention of going in search of de Vergy, but since he has appointed an hour to see me, I shall certainly await him.' 'Well, then,' said Lord Halifax, 'were you even the Duke of Bedford, I should have to give you in charge of the Guards.' 'I have not the honour of being the Duke of Bedford; I am M. D'Eon, and can take perfectly good care of myself;' adding, wishing to escape all further interference: 'I have an engagement at the play-house this evening, and beg to take leave of your Excellency.' On turning to leave the room he was surprised to find the door locked, and said somewhat testily to the ministers, that he never could have believed it possible for a minister plenipotentiary from France to find himself a prisoner in England, in the house of a Secretary of State; whereupon Lord Halifax handed him a slip of paper, with the request that he would attach his signature to what was written on it. D'Eon read the note, and as he persisted in refusing to sign it, although repeatedly pressed to do so by the ministers, the door was thrown open, and a detachment of the Guards, with bayonets fixed, occupied the room in which the company was assembled, and the adjoining chambers as well. There were no means

when *La Châteignerie* was killed in single combat with *Jarnac*. A decree of the Legislative Assembly, dated September 17, 1792, abolished prosecution for duelling, and rescinded all punishments for duels fought after July 14, 1789. Since 1832-33, the Court of Cassation has decreed death at duel to be murder anticipated by the law.

of retreat. On seeing the officer, D'Eon said: 'Do your duty and I will do mine. If it is to see me home that you have come I need no soldiers, for I can go perfectly well alone and on foot.' Then, addressing the ministers, he intimated that when his regiment again looked upon the uniform he was wearing, it should either be unsullied or drenched in blood! A compromise was effected, the soldiers were withdrawn, and the Chevalier signed the following declaration 'in obedience to orders.'

'The Chevalier D'Eon gives his word of honour to the Earls of Sandwich and Halifax that he will not fight M. de Vergy or insult him in any way, without previously communicating his intention to the said earls, in order that they may be able to prevent any evil consequences resulting from the Chevalier D'Eon's intentions and conduct.

'(Signed) 'The Chevalier D'EON DE BEAUMONT,

'By order and through the respect I owe to  
the ambassador of the King my master.'

'(Signed) 'DUNK HALIFAX.

'SANDWICH.

'GUERCHY.'

'Great George Street, October 26, 1763.'

Beyond reporting the circumstance of the Guards being summoned during the evening of October 26 to keep the peace, the daily papers gave no details of what passed in the reception-rooms of one of the King's ministers;<sup>1</sup> a variety of inaccurate versions found easy credence, and one other blunder was added to the acts of a blundering ministry.

De Vergy was true to his tryst. 'Here am I, sir,

<sup>1</sup> 'High words arose at a nobleman's house in Great George Street between two foreign gentlemen, and some hard expressions dropping, a challenge ensued; but the company present interposing, and a party of the Guards being sent for, further mischief was prevented.' *Scots Magazine*, vol. xxv.; *Daily Advertiser*, October 28, 1763, and other newspapers.

in fighting trim, only let me ask you a question. Are you minister plenipotentiary or a captain of dragoons? because if you are a minister I retire.' 'I am delighted to see you, for I have been expecting you. To you, I am simply a dragoon.' D'Eon then secured the door, intending to detain his visitor until he had sent word to the Embassy that de Vergy was with him. 'Do not touch me!' cried de Vergy in alarm; 'do not touch me!'. 'What!' said D'Eon smiling, 'you come to me in fighting trim, and are afraid lest I should touch you? No. I merely intend that you shall be arrested.' Then, leading him into his bed-chamber where were writing materials: 'I require you to read this note, and sign it in duplicate.' De Vergy started at seeing a brace of cavalry pistols and a sabre. 'Do not kill me!' D'Eon lay a pistol on the floor, and putting his foot on it said: 'There, it won't bite you. Now, sign with a will.'

'I, the undersigned, promise the Chevalier D'Eon, Captain of Dragoons, on my word of honour, that I will produce at the French Embassy in London, in the course of fifteen days, or at the furthest, one month, proper letters of recommendation from persons well known, or in office, at Versailles or Paris; failing which, I again give my word of honour to M. D'Eon that I shall never in future make my appearance before the Count and Countess de Guerchy, except as a very great, one of the greatest of adventurers.'

'London, October 27, 1763,

'At a quarter past ten in the morning.'

De Vergy quickly put his name to both slips, and was making for the door when D'Eon stopped him. 'I must trouble you to leave by the back way; my friends only pass through that door. Tell me who you are, or I shall hand you over to the Embassy.' 'M. D'Eon, do not detain me here or I am a lost man.'

‘Well, Mr. Adventurer, you may go; I do not wish for the death of a sinner, but rather for his conversion. If you bring letters and prove to me that you are an honest man, I shall be a good friend to you.’ D'Eon at once sent the duplicate of de Vergy's declaration to the ambassador, who complimented him upon his honourable behaviour; and de Vergy, having made the best of his way to the police-court, to lodge a complaint against the man who had been bullying him that morning, the Chevalier received the following notice in the course of the day:—

‘Mr. Kynaston, Justice of the Peace, presents his compliments to the Chevalier D'Eon, and has to inform him that M. de Vergy has sworn information against him for wishing to break the peace. Mr. Kynaston therefore requests that M. D'Eon will appear before him at six o'clock precisely, this evening, at Sir John Fielding's, Bow Street, Covent Garden, to answer the charge of the said M. de Vergy.’<sup>1</sup>

‘Bow Street, Covent Garden,  
‘October 27, 1763.’

No notice was taken of this summons by the Chevalier, in the first place because it was not authenticated by any signature, and because as minister plenipotentiary he did not consider himself bound to answer it. The matter went no further.

Regardless of his dignity, the ambassador continued to importune D'Eon for the surrender of his papers, advances that were now met in that spirit of defiance the Chevalier thought himself safe in assuming, armed as he was with the King's secret commands. De Guérchy was furious at D'Eon's obstinacy and intractability, and resorted to endless expedients for injuring him in public and private estimation. Acting as he did, in concert

<sup>1</sup> *Note, &c.* 16.

with de Praslin, his first care was to circulate the report of the Chevalier's insanity, which he even carried to the Princess Augusta at Court. He caused two damaging pamphlets to be published,<sup>1</sup> and further annoyed him in a hundred different ways, even to the jeopardy of his person, hoping to drive him out of the country and back to France. De Guerchy, however, was no match for his dexterous subordinate, and he so far forgot himself as to entreat the Duke de Choiseul to write a flattering and coaxing letter to the Chevalier, under the title of minister plenipotentiary, to invite him to repair to Versailles and lay his grievances before the King. 'You will perhaps think me a fool for asking you to resort to means so little consonant with your character, but I do not see my way to anything else for the present.'<sup>2</sup>

The Chevalier did lay his grievances before the King, but in a manner very different to that intended by de Guerchy, for he reported in a long despatch, taken to Versailles by his kinsman and collaborator, de la Rosière, the treatment he had received at the hands of the ambassador, and his own conduct under the circumstances. We give a few extracts only, such as are indispensable to our narrative:—

*Secret and Important. To the Counsellor and his Deputy.*<sup>3</sup>

'London, November 18, 1763.

'M. de la Rosière will give you an account of all the tricks, entreaties, threats, promises, &c., to which the Count de

<sup>1</sup> *Lettre d'un Français à M. le Duc de Nivernois à Paris* (October 1763, by M. Goudard.) 2. *Lettre à M. de la M——, Ecuyer, &c.* (by M. Treyssac de Vergy, November 19, 1763) D'Eon sent copies to the Duke de Choiseul, 'that he might have an idea of the real liberty enjoyed in England.'

<sup>2</sup> The Count de Guerchy to the Duke de Choiseul, November 12, 1763.—De Broglie, ii. 151.

<sup>3</sup> See p. 76 for these terms.

Guerchy has resorted, in his endeavours to discover the secret motives of my conduct. He will also inform you of the manner in which I have eluded all his questions, and the little importance I have attached to his promises and threats. I do not think it possible to carry matters further than I have done, nor for any ambassador, or indeed for any man in the world to be more humiliated and mystified than is the Count de Guerchy. As to his threats, I scorn them; I have told him personally that I am firmly determined to resist him, and that should he make his appearance with another detachment of the Guards, I would not attack him, but if he cared to call upon me, he should see how I received him at my door. My door is narrow, and only sufficiently wide to enable one person to enter at a time. I am still Minister Plenipotentiary, for I have not taken leave, and if I choose, I shall take my stand on political grounds, for the next twelve months, before I apply for an audience of leave. All I need is sufficient to meet the expenses of my lodgings and board. La Rosière will tell you that I have prepared eighteen points of defence, which must be carried before I can be compelled to take my leave. I alone, and La Rosière, if he remembers them, know what are those points of defence, and when the Count de Guerchy and Lord Halifax attacked me for the first time, I unmasked one redoubt, and they met with a reverse. M. de Guerchy, S——, and M—— being greatly irritated at my stay at this Court, where the King, the Queen, and the royal family continue to treat me with the same consideration as hitherto, and at a loss to know to what saint they should offer a vow to ensure my retirement, have resorted to the darkest and most iniquitous expedients.'

'On Friday, October 28, the Count de Guerchy was dining with Lord Sandwich, and I went to dine at the French Embassy, where the company included the Countess de Guerchy, her daughter, M. de Blosset, the Count d'Allonville, and M. Monin. Soon after dinner, the Countess went out with her daughter, and I remained with the gentlemen who chattered like magpies. I began to feel unwell and very drowsy. On leaving the house, the use of a sedan-chair at the door was offered me, but I refused, preferring to walk home, where, in spite of



myself, I fell sound asleep in my easy chair. Feeling worse, and as if my stomach were on fire, I went to bed early, and although in the habit of rising at six or seven, I slept soundly until midday, when La Rosière awoke me by violently kicking at the door. I have since discovered that M. de Guerchy, who has a physician in his house, caused opium to be put into my wine, in the belief that I should fall into a deep sleep after dinner, when I would have been placed in a chair, and instead of being taken to my own home, carried to the Thames, where it appears there was a boat in readiness to take me away. La Rosière will corroborate what I say.<sup>1</sup>

‘The following evening M. Monin came to dine with me. I spoke to him of my indisposition, and he told me that he had experienced similar, but not so serious symptoms. Several days elapsed, and the Count de Guerchy, accompanied by his two aides-de-camp, came to me before nine in the morning. They inspected my rooms, and the ambassador asked what ailed me. I replied with Burgundian candour: “I have been very unwell since I dined at your Excellency’s table on the 28th; it would appear that your scullery maids are not careful to scour their pots and pans. This comes of keeping a large establishment; one is poisoned without knowing or wishing it.” The Count de Guerchy then said: “I have ordered my butler to keep a better eye on the kitchen department, for these gentlemen and M. Monin have also felt unwell. We are going to walk to Westminster, and had you not been indisposed, I should have asked you to accompany us. . . .”

‘Two days subsequently to the ambassador’s visit, a locksmith called to fit some screws to my door. I guessed what was to happen, but admitted the man, and feigning to be at work at my writing table, kept my eye on him. He oiled the lock, removed the key from inside to outside the door, and in doing so very smartly took a wax impression of it. I contained myself sufficiently to ask what I owed him for his labour.’

<sup>1</sup> D'Eon acquits the Countess of having had any part in the plot against his life. Of a house rendered illustrious by its virtues and courage, she would never have consented to such an act. Was she to be reproached for having married an unknown poisoner? She was, perhaps, to be reproached for avarice and ugliness, but for this, nature was to blame. As for her soul it was pure and Christian.—‘Preamble to Will.’ Ch. MSS.

These incidents, the attempts made to bribe his servants, the fact of a sedan being continually stationed at his door, although it was not ordered, convinced him of some bold design on his person and papers, and he resolved upon leaving his apartments in Dover Street, which he did on November 9, removing to the house of a Mr. Lautem, wine merchant, 32 Brewer Street, Golden Square, which became his abode for many years after.

A puerile annoyance to which D'Eon had been subjected during the last few days of his stay in Dover Street, was a rapping and plaintive sounds at two o'clock every morning, which proceeded from the flue of a chimney communicating between his own bedroom, and the apartments in the floor below occupied by l'Escallier, private secretary to the ambassador, who, as the zealous auxiliary in the plots of his master, employed a young sweep to ascend the chimney and make 'ghostly noises.' The count was trying very hard to pass off D'Eon for a madman, and that he might obtain evidence to that effect, had conceived this bright idea for frightening the Chevalier, imagining that such noises and groans in the dark would terrify him, cause him to leave his bed and summon the servants. Monin, the count's old tutor, who lodged in the room above l'Escallier and the other dependants devoted to him, would be able to depose that nothing was found; that there was no cause for alarm, and thus prove the minister plenipotentiary's insanity, or at any rate his being a visionary, which would go far towards completing the success of the scheme for having him arrested and confined as a lunatic. 'This incident of itself suffices to illustrate the meanness and wickedness of the count and his party.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ch. MSS. 737.

Although a good deal of trouble was taken to persuade Louis XV. that his minister plenipotentiary in London was demented, he does not appear ever to have seriously believed in the accusation. After seeing D'Eon's letters of September 25 to de Praslin and de Guerchy, we find the King writing to Tercier, October 11, 1763 :—

' . . . D'Eon has written several singular letters ; it is apparently his office of Minister Plenipotentiary that has turned his head. M. de Praslin has in consequence proposed that he should be made to come here, when his condition will be inquired into. If he is mad, be on your guard lest he should divulge anything. . . .' In another letter, dated October 12 :—  
' . . . You will see D'Eon upon his arrival in Paris, and I authorise you to concert with him for taking every precaution that the secret be guarded. . . .' Again, October 21 :—  
' . . . You may send the letter to D'Eon if you are quite certain that he has not already taken his departure. . . .' Finally, December 30 :—  
' . . . M. D'Eon is not mad, but he is proud and a very extraordinary person. . . .'<sup>1</sup>

It is possible that the representations of the French ministers on D'Eon's mental condition, received some support from Walpole's chit-chat to the Earl of Hertford, ambassador in Paris.

' D'Eon is here still,' wrote the former, on November 25, 1763 ; ' I know nothing more of him, but that the honour of having a hand in the peace overset his poor brain. This was evident on the fatal night at Lord Halifax's ; when they told him his behaviour was a breach of the peace, he was quite distracted, thinking it was the *peace* between his country and this.'

As Walpole was not present at Lord Halifax's the evening of October 26, he probably obtained these details from his friend de Guerchy.

<sup>1</sup> Boutaric, i. 290-310.

Thwarted at all points by the Chevalier, who was proving himself to be his superior in shrewdness and audacity, and indeed in every other quality that the circumstances during their sensational disputes necessitated, and dreading the certain exposure, by his intended victim, of the criminal act of which he had been guilty, the ambassador, miserably perplexed, entreated his valued friend de Praslin to extricate him out of a position which had become quite unendurable. The result was a joyous one to de Guerchy, a special courier having brought a request to the British Government for the extradition of D'Eon and the seizure of all his papers ; but with his habitual foresight and caution, the King took care to forestall the ministers by despatching a secret messenger with written instructions to his ambassador and to his minister plenipotentiary, neither of whom was to be made aware of the communication received by the other.

*Louis XV. to the Count de Guerchy.*

Fontainebleau, November 4, 1763.

‘Monsieur le Comte,—The Duke de Praslin transmits to you, this day, a demand for extradition addressed by us to the ministers of our brother, his Majesty the King of Great Britain, having reference to the person of the Sieur D'Eon de Beaumont. If, as we think, his Britannic Majesty accedes to our demand, it will be particularly agreeable to us that you retain the papers you will find in the possession of the Sieur D'Eon, without communicating their contents to anybody. It is our will that they be kept entirely, and without exception, secret, and that the said papers being previously carefully sealed, shall remain in your keeping until you take your next annual trip, when you will deliver them to ourselves in person. We have learnt that M. Monin, your secretary, has some knowledge of the place where these papers are likely to have been deposited by the Chevalier D'Eon. If it is true that M. Monin has any idea of

the sort, we request you to make the same known to us, after having communicated to him the contents of this letter in our hand. In thus doing, we shall be specially pleased.

‘LOUIS.’

*Louis XV. to the Chevalier D'Eon.*

‘Fontainebleau, November 4, 1763.

‘I warn you that a demand for extradition, having reference to your person and signed with my stamp, has this day been addressed to Guerchy to be transmitted by him to the ministers of his Britannic Majesty, the said demand being accompanied by police officers to assist in its execution. If you cannot make your escape, save at least your papers, and do not trust M. Monin, Guerchy’s secretary and your friend. He is betraying you.’<sup>1</sup>

LOUIS.’

Thus was the Chevalier about to be dealt with as an ordinary malefactor for having braved the fury of de Praslin and of the ambassador, losing also his best friend de Nivernois, in his intense devotion to the King whose secret correspondence and interests in England he was protecting; and because his freedom was imperilled by the ministers of France, the selfish, vacillating, and weak monarch was secretly scheming for the transfer of the compromising papers into the custody of the very man from whom it had cost D'Eon so much to withhold them, and for doing which he had been fast ensuring his own ruin. The King was feeling that the step he had taken threatened imminent danger to the other secret agents immediately concerned—the Count de Broglio and Tercier, but his conscience was easily relieved, and in addressing a few words of explanation and comfort to the latter, he fancied he was justifying his course of action, and reassuring those who were serving him far more faithfully than he deserved.

<sup>1</sup> Routaric, i. 302, 303.

'I am writing to Guerchy, and order him to keep the secret from everybody. I am instructing him to keep all the papers sealed, until his return to Paris upon the annual trip he proposes taking. . . . If Guerchy betrays the secret, he betrays me, *and will be a lost man*. If he is a man of honour, he will not do so; if he is a knave, he deserves to be hanged. It is very clear that you and the Count de Broglio are uneasy. Be reassured, I am much more unconcerned. . . . Having so freely entrusted Guerchy with the secret, he will keep it. . . . The case is different with Madame de Guerchy. I hope he will not tell his wife anything about it. . . .'<sup>1</sup>

De Broglio was of an entirely different opinion. Upon hearing of what the King had done, he declared to Tercier, in a note he wrote from his place of exile, that de Guerchy would assuredly divulge the secret, and that his wife was as assuredly already acquainted with it.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Boutaric, i. 302-304.

<sup>2</sup> De Broglio, ii. 148.

## CHAPTER VIII.

Refusal of the British Government to deliver D'Eon—A force organised to kidnap him—Mines and garrisons his house against intrusion—De Guerchy reports to Louis XV. his failure to obtain the secret papers—D'Eon's letter to his mother—Publication of official and private letters of ministers, ambassadors, &c.—Consternation produced in consequence—Applies to enter the service of a foreign State—Appeals to de Broglio and Tercier on his situation—A conciliatory letter the result.

IN hastening to make a formal demand for the arrest of D'Eon and seizure of all his papers, the French ambassador was feeling satisfied that the days of his obnoxious subordinate were numbered, but 'one of the qualities of a great general is the glance, in war, that reveals to him the advantages and disadvantages of the field on which the contest is about to take place. Had General de Guerchy known this, would he ever have selected the ground of liberty in London and Westminster to wage an unjust and despotic war against the Chevalier D'Eon? But this would not be matter for surprise, when it was once known that at the battle of Minden he gave the marvellous advice to place cavalry in the centre and infantry on the wings. The result of the two actions could not but be similar.'<sup>1</sup>

The Chevalier was perfectly safe. Lord Halifax sent the case, 'which was of a very extraordinary kind and without any known precedent,' for the consideration of the Advocate and Solicitor-General, and eventually had to inform the French ambassador that,

<sup>1</sup> Ch. MSS. 786.

‘ according to the law of the kingdom, it would be impossible to justify the seizure either of the person or of the papers ’ of the Chevalier D'Eon.<sup>1</sup>

Since he could not be legally apprehended, the attempt was to be made, under de Guerchy's authority, to kidnap the Chevalier, and for this purpose some twenty-five to thirty French police officers and spies, in charge of an officer, and who had already been some days in London, were watching a favourable opportunity for seizing and putting him into a six-oared boat in readiness at Westminster, whence he was to be conveyed to a small vessel, manned by twenty armed men, lying at Gravesend.

The Chevalier was fully aware of the proceedings of his enemies, and took his precautions accordingly. The security of the King's papers being his first care, he confided a portion of them to de la Rosière, and actually sent him to France, there to remain, at least for a time. Then, to ensure himself from the abduction with which he was now threatened by an organised force, having concealed the remainder of the papers in his apartments, he converted them into a stronghold after the following manner:—His bedroom, sitting-room, and study on the first floor were mined, also the staircase, which he further intrenched. He kept a lamp burning throughout the night, and had a red-hot poker at his side during the day. His arsenal included four brace of pistols, two guns, and eight sabres. The garrison consisted of several dragoons of his old regiment, for whom he had sent, and some deserters he picked up in London, all trusty men, who occupied the basement with orders to admit the police officers should they at any time seek to enter, and then cut off their retreat

<sup>1</sup> *France Correspondence*, Public Record Office.



while he defended the intrenchment. It was arranged that, in the event of his being worsted, he should make a preconcerted signal to intimate that they were to run for their lives, whilst he fired the mine.<sup>1</sup>

Thus prepared, D'Eon resolutely awaited eventualities. De Guerchy made one other advance, after failure of the demand for extradition. He sent a conciliatory letter to the Chevalier, by one of the gentlemen at the Embassy, in which he renewed application for the surrender of the King's papers. The reception with which the attaché met may well be gathered by the nature of D'Eon's reply :—

'London, December 1, 1763,

'At four o'clock in the morning.

'Sir,—M. Prémarets fled from my house in such a hurry last night that he gave me no time, either to read the whole of your Excellency's letter or to speak to him. I invited him, however, to dinner, and to drink some good wine from Tonnerre; but he became unnecessarily alarmed, and insisted upon running away. Although a dragoon, I am not so black a devil as people would make me, and if your Excellency could see into my heart, you would find a very pure and a very clear conscience. . . . With regard to the King's papers for which you ask me, it is with an aching heart that I am obliged to tell your Excellency I cannot have the honour of delivering them without an express order from the King, and I beg that you will communicate this to those at Court. If you have such an order, be good enough to send it to me by my friend M. Monin; he has known me long, and must be fully persuaded that I will not only obey the orders of my master, but will die for him if needs be. I value my life at four *sous*, and those four *sous* I give to the poor. Your Excellency requires no length of time to obtain an order from the King, and if in the interim you should require any informa-

<sup>1</sup> Ch. MSS. 669. So late as September 1764, the Chevalier made a declaration before his friend Sir John Fielding, and other magistrates, to the effect that with the support of a band of men he was retaining for the purpose, he should resist by force any attempt on the part of the French constables to kidnap him. The house, 32 Brewer Street, remains unchanged.

tion in the interests of the service, I will give all it is in my power to communicate. Do not judge me hastily, and do not condemn me as yet; the future may teach you something. I repeat to you my entreaty to be thoroughly persuaded, that I have never wished to fail in my respect towards the Duke de Praslin and towards yourself; but bear in mind that I am determined to be otherwise, if you persist in continually seeking to force me to forget my duty, my sense of honour, of equity, and of liberty. Recollect, that when St. Peter was asleep on the Mount of Olives, he was thus reproached by his Master: "*Spiritus quidem promptus est, caro vero infirma.*" I therefore beg of you, sir, to allow me to sleep in peace in London, where I will firmly await the spies that have been sent to watch me. . . .<sup>1</sup>

The Chevalier was thus proving himself to be more than a match for the ambassador, who was finally obliged to confess to the King his complete failure in every effort he had made to execute his Majesty's commands.

*The Count de Guerchy to Louis XV.*

'London, December 6, 1763.

'Sire,—I have been expecting to execute the orders contained in the letter your Majesty did me the honour to address to me from Fontainebleau on November 4, before replying to it; but I have found it quite impracticable to do so, notwithstanding the various means employed. Your Majesty will have been informed, by my despatch, of the obstacles with which I meet in my endeavours to possess myself of D'Eon's papers, for he persistently refuses to deliver them to me, in spite of the order he has received from M. de Praslin in the name of your Majesty.<sup>2</sup> This is one of the peculiarities of his insanity, which, however, does not affect him on all points. Your Majesty will also have been informed that the Court of London has authoritatively refused my request, in saying that it was against the laws of the country. At any rate, the King of England and his ministers

<sup>1</sup> *Lett. Mém. &c.* i. 100.

<sup>2</sup> 'D'Eon has replied by putting it (the order) into his pocket.'—Louis XV. to Tercier, December 30, 1763. Boutaric, i. 310.

are very anxious to get rid of this individual. I have not been able to seize upon his person, either by force or by stratagem, because he is no longer with me, nor has he been here since going to such extremes. I have communicated to Monin your Majesty's commands as directed ; he tells me he has good reason for believing, as the result of several questions he has put to D'Eon, that no papers concerning your Majesty, personally, have been brought to London, and he thinks it more probable that they have been left in Paris. . . . I deem it expedient to send this letter by M. le Bel. I am deeply grieved, Sire, at not being able to furnish your Majesty upon this occasion with proofs of the fervent zeal by which I will be actuated through life.'

## ENCLOSURE.

*Memorandum from M. Monin to the King.*

'In consequence of his Majesty's commands signified to Monin, he has been doubly diligent in devising means for recovering the papers his Majesty desires to possess. The glimmers of hope he has sometimes entertained, warranted as they were by a certain air of confidence and openness of heart on the part of M. D'Eon, have vanished, and all those means to which the ambassador has had recourse have proved unavailing. Monin has restricted himself to seeking to discover where the papers are kept or concealed. M. D'Eon has admitted to having deposited them in different places without naming them, but of one fact Monin is certain, and it is this. Previous to M. de Guerchy's departure for England, M. D'Eon lodged a box, containing papers, with M. Tercier, where he, Monin, saw it ; and so soon as he had learnt of M. D'Eon's recall, he deemed it his duty, as a faithful and zealous subject, to recommend to M. Tercier that he should obtain his Majesty's instructions as to its contents. I have no doubt [*sic*] that M. Tercier, who considered the recommendation as expedient and important, has acted accordingly ; this portion of his Majesty's secrets should therefore be in his hands.'

<sup>1</sup>

We have been obliged to reproduce, almost at length, the communications received by the King from de

<sup>1</sup> Boutaric, i. 307.

Guerchy, because they show how successfully D'Eon was keeping at bay, or misleading all those, whose hands he considered were lifted against him. 'I have at last received a letter from M. de Guerchy with Monin's memorandum enclosed, which I send to you,' wrote Louis XV. to Tercier; and then the King betrays his uneasiness and restless anxiety for the safety of his papers, and yet his objection to having them in his own possession or anywhere about him, fearing perhaps a repetition of the scene in the month of June. 'Take care of the Sieur de la Rosière, or rather of his papers, for it is known that he is here, and if he were visited all might be discovered.'<sup>1</sup>

De Guerchy's next step was to submit to Lord Halifax, so far as the wording was concerned, and with the desire that it should be inserted in the official newspaper, a paragraph to the effect that the Chevalier was to be excluded, in the future, from the British Court.<sup>2</sup> His request was complied with, and an exact translation of the notice, under date of the ambassador's letter, appeared in an early number of the *Gazette*:—

'St. James', December 6.

'The Most Christian King having, upon his Ambassador Count de Guerchy's arrival here, sent to the Chevalier D'Eon de Beaumont, who had the character of Minister Plenipotentiary to this Court, his revocation from hence, with a letter addressed to his Britannic Majesty; and having been informed that M. D'Eon persisted in refusing to pay obedience to his orders, and to present the King his master's letter; his said Most Christian Majesty therefore wrote a second letter to the King, and commanded his Ambassador to present the same immediately, which, having been accordingly done, his Majesty has been pleased to declare that the said M. D'Eon has no longer any character here, and has forbid him the Court.'<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Boutaric, i. 309.

<sup>2</sup> *France Correspondence*, Public Record Office.

<sup>3</sup> Old newspapers.

Thus divested of his dignity, the Chevalier was also declared guilty of high treason, and all arrears of emoluments due to him were forfeited to the Crown—a pitiful situation naturally evoking very warm sympathy on the part of his old chief and well-wisher, the Count de Broglio, who himself had long been paying the penalty of his devotion to their mystery-loving royal master.<sup>1</sup> But, apart from personal considerations for D'Eon, the dangers to be apprehended from such limitless persecution were considerable, as the count took immediate occasion to remind the King.

‘It is an incontestable fact that the *Sieur D'Eon* is driven to despair; that without your Majesty's favour he will meet with a miserable fate in France, and that he possesses sure means of making a large fortune in England. . . . If, in revenge for the bad treatment he is experiencing, and impelled by the necessity of obtaining a living, he should publish your Majesty's instructions, which he holds, were he even to communicate them to English ministers, what might not be the unfortunate results? Should we not have to apprehend that the sacred person of your Majesty would be compromised, and that a declaration of war on the part of England would be inevitable?’

The count concluded his letter by enjoining that the ambassador should leave D'Eon in peace, and that one of his friends should be sent with an order signed by the King, requiring him, in warm-hearted terms, to return to France, with the special assurance that royal protection should not fail him.<sup>2</sup>

The calamity which befell the Chevalier did not visit him alone; it encompassed his mother and other relatives, and even their dependants at home. He was tenderly attached to his only parent, upon whom he

<sup>1</sup> See p. 53.

<sup>2</sup> The Count de Broglio to Louis XV., December 8, 1703. De Broglie, ii. 155.

had long since settled his little property, yet to her solicitude and gentle warnings he replied with all the vehemence of his strong and stormy nature.

*To Madame D'Eon de Beaumont, Tonnerre.*

'London, December 30, 1763.

'I have received, my dear mother, all the woeful and piteous letters you have taken the trouble to write to me. *Why weepest thou, woman of little faith?* as it is said in Scripture. Remember that our Lord, in the famed Temple of Jerusalem, said to his mother: *Woman, what have I to do with thee?* yet the mother was older than the Son. How this word *woman*, &c., caused the Scribes and Pharisees to laugh, and has shocked all the Doctors of the New Law, even those of Sorbonne! I will say to you with greater tenderness: my mother, what is there in common between your affairs at Tonnerre, and my political affairs in London? Do go on planting your cabbages in peace, weeding your garden and enjoying its fruit; drink the milk of your cows and the wine of your vines, and leave me in peace to the foolish sayings at Paris and Versailles. Dry up your tears, which grieve without comforting me. I am not in need of consolation, because I am not in the least sad. . . . I do my duty, and my adversaries, who call themselves great men, do not perform theirs—being guided in their actions by caprice and personal interests, and not in the least degree in the interests of justice, and for the welfare of the King and country. Let them do as they please, I will do as I think proper. . . . I do not fear the thunderbolts of these little Jupiters, be they far or near. This is all I have to say, therefore have your mind at ease, as is mine, and if you come to see me in London I shall be delighted, and I will take as good care of you as I do of the Court papers, which M. de Guerchy will not have except on good grounds, with colours flying, match alight, ammunition at hand, and drums beating. He shall not even have the envelopes of the letters, I swear it to you by all that is sacred, unless he brings to me an authentic order from the King, my master and his, and this is what he has not been able to effect hitherto.

'Do not believe I am insane, because reports to that effect

have reached Paris. I can assure you that my acts, in my supposed state of madness, would be acts of wisdom on the part of certain ambassadors. I am, and shall continue to be, the faithful servant of the King, but I am not, nor do I wish to be, the sordid servant of certain nobles, his worthless varlets. To those who tell you that your son is a wild animal reared in the forests of Burgundy or of Champagne (M. de Guerchy has already said this to me), reply as I and my friend Jean Jacques do, that nature treats all animals abandoned to her care with a certain predilection that seems to show how jealous she is of this right. The horse, the cat, the bull, and even the ass, should they become ambassadors, are usually taller, of a more robust constitution, more vigorous, stronger, and more courageous in forest-land than when living amongst us; they lose half these advantages in becoming domesticated; and it might be said that all our concern in well treating and feeding those animals, only tends to degenerate them. It is the same with man; in becoming social and the slave of the great, or of those who ape to be so, he becomes weak, timid, servile, and his inactive and effeminate style of living suffices to unnerve his strength and courage. . . . As to my huge brother-in-law, Mr. Gorman,<sup>1</sup> let him attend to his own affairs in Paris, I do not need his advice or that of any other person. . . . Let everybody mind his own business. I know my own affairs, not a soul in the world shall poke his nose into them, or I will singe his moustache. . . . Since you cannot *voler* as birds do, as great ladies and great gentlemen do, I will turn over to you, with great pleasure, my pension of 2,000 livres on the privy purse, which, in addition to what you possess, will enable you to live comfortably in some convent near Paris. . . . If you wish to do what is best, remain quietly in your charming retreat at Tonnerre, and do not return to Paris unless the Court pays your travelling expenses in some surer way than it has mine, and remember, that whether men praise or blame you,

<sup>1</sup> Chevalier, or as he was sometimes called Doctor, O'Gorman, related to the Thomond family, was married in 1757 to D'Eon's sister, whose dowry was a valuable property in Burgundy. O'Connell maintained he had thereby spoiled his pedigree. Roche, who was well acquainted with him, describes his stature as exceeding six feet five inches. O'Gorman spent his time in genealogical studies, when not more profitably employed in Ireland, selling the produce of his wife's vineyards.

you are none the better or the worse. *The glory of the righteous is in their conscience, and not in the praise of man.* I embrace you tenderly. . . . If you continue to weep, I shall have to supply you with some of the English East India Company's pocket-handkerchiefs, and you will no longer be my mother if you are not the virtuous woman spoken of by Solomon, and which I have not as yet been able to find anywhere. . . . Be at ease—these enemies are harmless as sheep; they are mischievous rather than dangerous.'<sup>1</sup>

D'Eon's determination not to deliver any of the papers in his possession, left no alternative to de Guerchy other than to obtain from him an official statement in writing of his refusal to obey the King's orders. This was effected at the residence of the Chevalier, who, ever apprehensive of treachery on the part of the ambassador's emissaries, whenever and wherever he met them, held himself in readiness armed, and levelling his gun at the witnesses, cried, 'It is at the end of this that you will find the King's papers; come and take them.'<sup>2</sup>

Mention has been made of the publication of a couple of pamphlets by direction of de Guerchy, as being one of the measures to which his Excellency resorted for bringing the Chevalier into disrepute.<sup>3</sup> They had reference to the scene at Lord Halifax's house on the evening of October 26, and to the minister plenipotentiary's intercourse with Treysac de Vergy. D'Eon never missed the opportunity for committing pen to paper, and in his turn published a lengthened statement, likewise in the form of a pamphlet.<sup>4</sup> It was a faithful recital of facts, and as such, he immediately forwarded a copy to his good friend the Duke de Choiseul, who,

<sup>1</sup> *Lett. Mém.* &c. i. 124.

<sup>2</sup> De Broglie, ii. 153.

<sup>3</sup> See p. 119.

<sup>4</sup> *Note remise à Son Excellence Monsieur le Comte de Guerchy, par Monsieur le Chevalier D'Eon* (November 30, 1763).



not being one of the executive triumvirate engaged in doing the will of the Marquise de Pompadour, had but a few weeks previously offered the Chevalier his protection and restoration to the army.<sup>1</sup> On issuing the 'Note,' he wrote to the King and to his secret confidants that he was avenging his honour thus infamously attacked, and hoped to receive orders which he had no desire to see nullified by any precipitate conduct on his part. . . . Great was his dismay at the nature of Tercier's communication in reply.

'Versailles, December 27, 1763.

'Your enemies have become all-powerful; far from diminishing, their influence over the King has increased, and they rule him completely. You are not unaware that Madame de Pompadour is the cause of all your troubles. You and the Count de Broglio are lost, if you do not avail yourself of all the courage and all the prudence with which you are endowed by Heaven, to save yourself from being compromised, or from having your person seized and your papers carried off. You and the Count de Broglio have only to rely, but in secret, upon the King who cannot abandon you, but whose policy would sacrifice you entirely, perhaps, to his mistress and to his ministers, notwithstanding his great regard for you. Rely upon my unalterable devotion.'

'Such is the language of one of those in whose words it is his Majesty's pleasure that I should place the most implicit confidence!' observes D'Eon. 'I weigh it with all the respect due

<sup>1</sup> Lines on the Duke de Choiseul, to whom D'Eon was much attached, written after his exile :—

' Dans ses traités et dans sa vie  
Règnent la droiture et l'honneur;  
L'Europe connaît son génie,  
Et les infortunés son cœur.  
Comme tout autre dans sa place,  
Il dut avoir des ennemis;  
Comme nul autre, en sa disgrâce  
Il acquit de nouveaux amis.'—(Ch. MSS.)

to the throne. The safety of the King's correspondence, of that of the Count de Broglie, and of my own, is entrusted to me, to my prudence and to my courage. Secretly, my King will support me if I escape out of the hands of his ministers, who will exact from him, though to his regret, the sacrifice of my person. What could be more outrageous! No matter, my mind is made up. My enemies invite me into the arena; I will rush upon them and overwhelm them if I can; but I will not contend except with my own weapons, and I will not expose my sovereign. I am recommended to be bold and prudent. My answer to the Count de Guerchy's "Contre-Note" will be the publication of my "Letters and Memoirs." I avenge every imputation and crush my adversary; so much for courage. My chiefs, my relatives, my protectors and my friends speak in my favour by their letters and by mine, and if the base and ridiculous character of my adversary becomes thus revealed, he will only owe the exposure to the pure and simple publication of his friends' and his own letters; so much for prudence.'

The 'Contre-Note'<sup>1</sup> was a third pamphlet de Guerchy had the weakness to employ Goudard to write, in vindication of himself and in severe condemnation of D'Eon; it was a retort to the 'Note' that had been addressed to him. D'Eon kept his word. The 'Lettres, Mémoires,' &c., which made their appearance, in quarto and octavo editions, are frequently referred to in this work. The volume, divided into three parts, opens with a violent and virulent attack on the French ambassador, giving rise, in due course, to an action for libel, and is followed by the Chevalier's correspondence with the Dukes de Praslin and de Nivernois, M. de Sainte-Foy, the Count de Guerchy, and others. Part II. relates to D'Eon's personal interests during his residence in London, and Part III. gives some particulars of his services, with copies of certificates, despatches, and letters, all favourable to

<sup>1</sup> *Contre-Note ou Lettre à Monsieur le Marquis L———, à Paris* (by M. Goudard, December 1763).

himself. The epigraph consists of three lines borrowed from Voltaire :—

‘ Pardonnez ; un soldat est mauvais courtisan.  
Nourri dans la Scythie, aux plaines d’Arbazan,  
J’ai pu servir la cour, et non pas la connaître.’

The motto is *Vita sine litteris mors est*, and the post face at the end of Part II. is inscribed :—

‘ If the precious selection that forms this little correspondence greatly offends the authors of the injustice from which I am suffering, I will give a second edition of Letters, without extracts and without blanks ; the text will be as genuine as the book of Genesis, where the points of the Massorets will not be employed.’

The Chevalier was at no loss to justify himself for having thus exposed the private correspondence of French ministers. When he saw that de Guerchy and de Praslin made it their business to despatch courier after courier to each other, and secretly spread reports upon the subject of his affairs, he made up his mind to publish what disconcerted their measures. Nobody was able to conceive how a young captain of dragoons could have the temerity to be the first to impugn an old lieutenant-general, Knight of the King’s Orders, his Majesty’s Ambassador Extraordinary, a friend of thirty years’ standing of the Ministers of France, a favourite of the King, and allied to several powerful houses ; but everybody was able to perceive, without any difficulty, that it was the lieutenant-general and favourite ambassador who had commenced the attack, and that the captain, minister plenipotentiary, was obliged to defend himself. Was there cause for libel in writing against a poisoner, an assassin, who commenced by hiring scribblers to tarnish his reputation ? Was there cause for libel in publicly defending, when openly and publicly assailed,

one's honour, life, and liberty? Every law, human and divine, justifies such defence. In every suit, in every contention, in every quarrel, the aggressor is specially to be distinguished from the aggressed, the oppressor from the oppressed! Offensive war is the act of a tyrant; he who defends himself is justified. Had the count given the Chevalier good wine at his table, in the place of poison, there never would have been any dissension between them. The chief cause of the Chevalier's falling into disgrace with the French ambassador, lay in the former's evil or good luck, in seeing the latter take to flight on the right bank of the Weser, when, being under fire of the English and Hanoverians at the passage of that river, the Marshal de Broglio's order was delivered, directing him to give his support and distribute ammunition to the troops. The recollection of that incident must have been exceedingly disagreeable to the count, for when the Chevalier reminded him, upon the memorable evening at Lord Halifax's, that they had served together during the war, de Guerchy told Lord Halifax, in the presence of the other English ministers, that he had never met D'Eon, nor was he at all concerned to know who were the aides-de-camp to the Count and the Duke de Broglio. In reply, D'Eon maintained that he might perhaps remember having entertained him at his head-quarters upon more than one occasion, to discuss the hot pastry for which his cook was famous, and that when retreating from Einbeck, his column having missed its way, he had put it on the right road to Northeim.<sup>1</sup>

The giving his volume to the world produced the greatest consternation amongst those of the ruling powers whose private letters, several of an exceedingly

<sup>1</sup> Ch. MSS.

delicate nature, had thus been made public, and in exposing the secrets of ministers, D'Eon spared his friends as little as he did his bitterest enemies, the King only, in whom his faith was implicit, being held sacred by his daring spirit. The publication was no leap in the dark, but an ill-considered act, an irreparable blunder which brought upon him the extreme of gratuitous misery, and desertion by all those in authority.

No sooner was this book out of the printer's hands than the Count de Guerchy secured a copy, and sat for several hours with his wife poring over its contents. Some satirical passages on their love of economy having led to a quarrel between the two, they threw the volume at each other's heads. 'Could I have foreseen such a thing,' said the Chevalier upon being informed of the circumstance, 'I should have issued the book in a wooden binding!'<sup>1</sup>

As the publication caused a panic at Versailles, so was the sensation in London enormous. This is what Walpole had to say about it:—

'D'Eon has published (but to be sure you have already heard so) a most scandalous quarto, abusing Monsieur de Guerchy outrageously, and most offensive to Messieurs de Praslin and Nivernois. In truth I think he will have made all three irreconcilable enemies. The Duke de Praslin must be enraged as to the Duke's carelessness and partiality to D'Eon, and will certainly grow to hate Guerchy, concluding the latter can never forgive *him*. D'Eon, even by his own account, is as culpable as possible, mad with pride, insolent, abusive, ungrateful, and dishonest—in short, a complication of abominations, yet originally ill-used by his Court, afterwards too well; above all, he has great malice, and great parts to put that malice in play. Though there are even many bad puns in his book, a very un-

<sup>1</sup> Ch. MSS. 067

common fault in a French book, yet there is much wit too. Monsieur de Guerchy is extremely hurt. . . . I could write pages to you upon this subject, for I am full of it—but I will send you the book. The Council have met to-day to consider what to do upon it. Most people think it difficult for them to do anything. Lord Mansfield thinks they can'—Walpole disliked the judge, and adds—'but I fear he has a little alacrity on the severe side in such cases.'<sup>1</sup>

As I shall have occasion to return to Walpole, or rather to his letters, I would limit myself in the interests of this history, seeing that the opinions to which he gave expression were immatured except by his own specious judgment, hastily and prematurely formed, to quoting Macaulay's estimate of that *gentleman usher at heart*. 'He sneered at everybody, put on every action the worst construction which it could bear,' and we are told, further, that he 'spelt every man backward.'

A painful sense of oppression was produced on D'Eon by Tercier's letter of December 27, and nothing, not even his vigorous mind, could rouse him out of the state of despondency into which he had fallen. To his kindest of protectors, the Duke de Nivernois, he said ' . . . all my trust is in your tender friendship for me, and all my fear lies in your weakness for your friends.' If the power of his enemies was too great, he continued, to enable the duke to break asunder the chain of error, of falsehood, and of iniquity, he should only ask permission, for himself and his two cousins, to enter the service of a foreign State, a request they made with their hearts plunged in the bitterest grief; for there were none more ready than they to shed the last drop of their blood for the King they adored, and their native land which they cherished.

<sup>1</sup> Walpole to the Earl of Hertford, March 27, 1764, and more besides in a letter to Charles Churchill, Esq., March 27, 1764.

‘ . . . Since my zeal, my services, and my disinterestedness have incriminated me in my own country, I must, in spite of myself, seek a country where I shall be at liberty to lead the life of a good citizen. That country is found for me, Monsieur le Duc, this you know, and I will not hide it from you. . . .’

In an enclosure, under flying seal, addressed to his other good friend the Duke de Choiseul, he thus expressed himself :—

‘ . . . Your cousinship to the Duke de Praslin, and private reasons, will no doubt have prevented you from rendering to me that justice which is my due, and which exists in your heart. . . . Forced as I am, by the revolting injustice I am experiencing, by the suppression of my pension out of the privy purse, and by the numerous enemies that my zeal, blind no doubt in the cause of my country, or that the envy of traitors to that same country have excited against me ; I find myself under the grievous necessity of entreating you to do me the favour, to send the King’s permission that I, and two of my cousins, may enter the service of a foreign Power. . . .’<sup>1</sup>

To D’Eon’s surprise, these letters remained unnoticed. He appealed to the King, to the Count de Broglie, to Tercier, for support in his perplexing situation, but nothing came. All were silent. Yet, for his own sake, the count had never been callous to the cries of the Chevalier, nor was he so now, for D’Eon’s doom, were the designs against him carried to a successful issue, would be the harbinger of his own fate. He followed up his suggestion of December 6 to the King, by proposing that his secretary, the Chevalier Nort, should be sent to England to conciliate D’Eon. The King approved, but with his customary dilatoriness nothing was done. Then were brought the news of the recall from exile of the de Broglies, and of the moribund condition of the Marquise de Pompadour, and wearisome darkness, the

<sup>1</sup> D’Eon to the Duke de Nivernois, February 15, 1764, and to the Duke de Choiseul, same date. Gaill. 163.

poor proscribed one thought, would give place to light, and relief be at hand! Still nothing came, though weeks had passed; to remain thus disregarded and treated with silent contempt was more than the Chevalier's nature could endure. He again addressed himself to Tercier, this time openly throwing the gauntlet, with what results will be known hereafter.

*To the Solicitor.<sup>1</sup>*

'London, March 23, 1764.

'Sir,—Although the recall of the Marshal and of the Count de Broglio should be as useful and as necessary to the King's service as to the ends of justice, in the settlement of my affairs, I cannot conceal from you my surprise at the complete silence of yourself and of the Count de Broglio, in the cruel position into which the wickedness, to say nothing more, of the Count de Guerchy has plunged me, and his enmity, particularly to the house of Broglio, which is the real origin of my misfortunes.

'Your silence and my position are such, that I send M. Nardin<sup>2</sup> to Paris, to his friend la Rosière; he will relate to him, in person, all that has taken place since his departure, and the latter will deliver to you this letter, to request urgently that you will give me a categorical reply as to what I am or am not to expect, so that I may be guided accordingly. It is very sad, that after having sacrificed myself so willingly for the benefit and honour of the King's service, I should have recourse to such explanations, or rather to such extremities. You must feel all the force of what I wish to say. I will never be the first to desert the King or my country, but if, unhappily, the King and my country should think proper to sacrifice me by deserting me, I shall be obliged, in spite of myself, to abandon the latter, and in doing so, I will justify myself before the whole of Europe, and nothing will be easier to me, as you are well aware. I admit that such a sacrifice will be hard for me, but it will also cost France dearly, and the very idea of this

<sup>1</sup> See p. 76.

<sup>2</sup> Colonel Nardin had been employed by Louis XV. to watch over the security of D'Eon and his papers.



makes me shed tears. Yet, such are the extremes and the fatal resolutions which might be engendered by the ingratitude and intrigue that sustains an ambassador, so unworthy of the title as is the Count de Guerchy.

‘I will not conceal from you, sir, that the enemies of France, believing they may be able to take advantage of the cruel position in which I find myself, have invited me to enter their service. Whatever the benefits they offer, I cannot be influenced, and I shall be guided under these circumstances by my honour only; I have answered as became me, and have said that I could not enter into any engagement, as I still considered myself in the service of the King; and my King abandons me! And yet, from the very first, I have only acted in conformity with his great secret project, and his written orders which I will defend with my life.

‘You ought to know that scarcely had the Count de Guerchy superseded me here, than the subject was broached to him of the second demolition of the lunette and other works at Dunkirk, and that this second demolition, which I had successfully averted and set aside during the period of five months, was accomplished to the shame and prejudice of France.<sup>1</sup> I am truly ashamed for my country.

‘The leaders of the opposition have offered me any money I require, on condition that I deliver to them my papers and letters, under seal, promising to return them to me in exactly the same state when the money is brought to me.<sup>2</sup> I unbosom myself to you, and you must feel how repugnant to me must be such an expedient. And yet, if I am forsaken, what would you have me do? As to the papers of the Counsellor and of his deputy, I guard them more jealously than ever; I have them all, also Rosière’s. The cypher alone I burnt in his presence, and the whole are so well concealed in my study, that by means

<sup>1</sup> According to the terms of the late treaty, the town and port of Dunkirk were to be restored to the state fixed by the treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle and other treaties, and particularly the lunette should be destroyed immediately after the exchange of ratifications, as well as the forts and batteries which defended the entrance from the sea. The work proceeded so slowly, that it was considered it would take seven years to complete; eventually, all the fortifications were demolished by September 1764.

<sup>2</sup> This offer amounted to 20,000*l*.

of a mine I have myself contrived, and several trains that lead to it from different parts of my room, I can in an instant blow my little study, the would-be rescuers, the papers and my own self, fifty feet into the air. But, if I am entirely forsaken, and if, between this and April 22, Easter Sunday, I do not receive a promise, signed by the King or by the Count de Broglio, to the effect that reparation will be made to me for all the ills I have endured at the hands of M. de Guerchy, then, sir, I declare to you formally and authentically, I shall lose all hope, and in forcing me to embrace the cause of the King of England, of his ministry and of the Houses of the Lords and Commons, *you must make up your mind to a war at no distant period, of which I shall surely be but the innocent cause, and this war will be inevitable.* The King of England will be driven into it by the nature of circumstances, by the voice of the nation, and by the opposition which is gaining, rather than losing, in strength. Here, sir, is my confession, and here are all the evils that will have been prepared by M. de Guerchy and his gang. Behold your great project, so glorious for the King and so advantageous to France, turning against you. Your reply, sir, fully authentic, and signed by the Counsellor, or at least by his deputy, will inform me if, by next Easter at the latest, I am to remain an honest Frenchman, or become, in spite of myself, an honest Englishman.<sup>1</sup>

The King took the matter coolly enough. He knew his man, and must have been full well persuaded that he could safely rely upon his loyalty and attachment to his person, and that there was consequently no immediate cause for alarm. When informed for the first time of the tempting offers made to the Chevalier in England, he merely said : ‘ I do not believe that D'Eon will become an Englishman, for he has nothing to gain from the ministry, and what will he do if he joins the opposition ? Send him two hundred ducats . . . ’ and then he wrote word to Tercier, ‘ . . . I have nothing to say as regards the Sieur D'Eon. I doubt that we should

<sup>1</sup> Boutaric, i. 213.

have war, no matter what he were to say ; but we must prevent such an exposure.' Still, as if impressed with the obvious necessity for being wise in time, his Majesty added, 'I approve of the despatch of the Sieur de Nort ; make every necessary arrangement accordingly.'<sup>1</sup>

It is possible that Tercier, who was in the habit of keeping D'Eon informed of all that was passing at Court, so far as he was concerned, had told him before their correspondence was interrupted that the King 'did not at all care to see the "Mémoires" in print.'<sup>2</sup> At any rate, in a second letter in which he pressed his case, and which quickly followed the first, we find the Chevalier offering some passing words of explanation on the course he had pursued.

'London, March 27, 1764.'<sup>3</sup>

'Sir,—I hope that M. Nardin, whom I despatched on the morning of the 23rd to rejoin his friend La Rosière, and to cause to be remitted to you through him a very urgent letter from myself, is actually with you, and in a position to relate to La Rosière all that has occurred here during the last four months. The Count de Guerchy having thought proper to publish a lying apology for his conduct, or what is rather a libel against myself, full of wickedness and slander, I patiently waited awhile, and was then obliged to reply to it by unanswerable statements and letters. I have consequently published what I had to say, and have expressly made a bulky volume of it, that the project of our great secret affair may be the more completely screened.

'Our poor ambassador, quite at his wit's ends, has no idea beyond that of blind vengeance ; he has been to his friend the Duke of Bedford, a man even more violent than himself ; he has

<sup>1</sup> Louis XV. to Tercier, December 30, 1763 ; March 25, 1764. Boutaric, i. 311, 316.

<sup>2</sup> Louis XV. to Tercier, December 30, 1763. *Ibid.* 311.

<sup>3</sup> 'This letter was addressed to the Rev. Father Loris, Rue du Regard, and was sent to me by his Majesty on April 5, 1764.' Endorsement in the hand of Tercier. Loris was probably a fictitious name. *Ibid.* 317.

been to all the other ministers to get them to see the book ; but all this has only turned to my advantage. He is at present moving heaven and earth, together with the Duke of Bedford, to have me seized by force or by stratagem, that I may be sent to France. I was warned last night by a friend of the Duke of Bedford, that the Count de Guerchy has not left a stone unturned to excite the duke's wrath against me. This same person also warned me yesterday morning that at a council held at St. James', the ministers had deliberated upon the means to be employed for arresting me and handing me over to France ; but he could not tell me to what decision they had arrived. This, sir, is of the greatest consequence, and it is important that his Majesty should be good enough to order the Count de Guerchy to leave me in peace. I give you notice, most earnestly, that the first person who comes to my house, or attacks me in the street, will at once fall, no matter who he is, and I am quite indifferent as to the consequences. I again give you notice, that several leaders of the opposition send daily to see whether I am safe, and at the first attempt at violence against me, the embassy and all that it contains will be torn to pieces by what is here known as the *mob*, that is to say, the mariners and rabble from the city, who are at the call of the opposition. You are sensible of all the disasters about to take place. The Count de Guerchy ignores the whole of this ; he is not bright enough to apprehend all that is going on, and even if he were, he would not report, but rather conceal from the King what he knew. You are aware that I have never deceived you ; I should be loth to do so under such important and pressing circumstances, and I must not conceal from you, that if I am once taken, after having so long and carefully cautioned you, and the King affords no relief, in such a case I will no longer consider myself bound to preserve the secret, and shall be obliged, thus driven to extremities, to justify my conduct ; a still greater misfortune than the firing of the French embassy by the people.'

These resolute letters had their consequences. M. Nort was hurried off to London with the King's secret instructions, taking with him a conciliatory letter from

the Count de Broglio, a sum of money for D'Eon, and special directions to effect an arrangement, if possible, between the ambassador and the turbulent captain of dragoons.<sup>1</sup> De Praslin, on his part, had sent his own agent to England, with orders to take D'Eon *alive*, above everything, it being his intention to confine him when secured, in the Bastille.<sup>2</sup> 'You must admit that his private letters are deserving of this,' said Louis XV. to Tercier; 'but it is more essential that he should be conciliated and my papers recovered.'

<sup>1</sup> 'The Sieur de Nort will leave for England as soon as he receives my orders to that effect through the Count de Broglio, and he will strictly comply with the instructions he will receive from him in my name, and in behalf of my service, so that he may be guided in his proceedings, whether as regards the Sieur D'Eon, or the Count de Guerchy, my ambassador. He will also execute whatever he may receive by word of mouth, or in writing, from the Sieur Tercier on this subject, and will preserve the most profound silence on this mission towards everybody, without any exception, but the persons above named.'—Louis XV. to M. de Nort, Versailles, April 9, 1764. Boutaric, i. 319.

<sup>2</sup> In 1789, after the destruction of the Bastille, D'Eon wrote a letter to Lord Stanhope, as President of the Revolution Society, and presented him with a stone from its ruins.

## CHAPTER IX.

D'Eon's intricate situation—Popular indignation in England at the late peace—Letter of gratitude to Louis XV. ; of reproach to the Count de Broglio—Sued for libel—Retains the King's papers as security for his person—Illegal proceedings on the part of the French ambassador—Out of door precautions against being kidnapped—English sympathy for D'Eon—Is found guilty of libel, absconds, is searched after, and outlawed—Confession of Treysac de Vergy—De Guerchy's charge against de Vergy.

WE may well pause awhile to recapitulate, and realise the parts that were being severally played by King, minister, ambassador, and late minister plenipotentiary, in this most extraordinary political drama. In the first place we see the late minister plenipotentiary as the custodian, not only of the King of France's written secret instructions and correspondence, extending over a series of years, but also of highly compromising documents, the property of his Majesty,<sup>1</sup> of which, had their signification been known to the people of England, still agitated and discontented at the terms of the late peace, would inevitably have plunged the two countries in a fresh and sudden war. Then we find the French Minister for Foreign Affairs, the willing instrument of the King's malicious mistress, employing his old friend, the ambassador in London, to carry out her bidding by seeking to obtain the whole of the plenipotentiary's papers, first by authoritatively demanding them, then by gentle measures, and afterwards at any hazard. The

<sup>1</sup> Plans for the invasion of England.

plenipotentiary and King's secret agent proves true to his trust in refusing to make any surrender, without the express orders of his sovereign, whose secret commands to that effect he holds. Of this the Minister for Foreign Affairs knows nothing. The plenipotentiary cannot serve two masters, and elects to submit himself to the King's will, of which he alone is cognisant. For refusing to yield to his superiors in office he is regarded as a rebel, then a traitor, is degraded, disgraced, and to be treated as if he were a common criminal, and this through orders wrested from the King by his minister ! Thus Louis XV., a cowardly stranger to every emotion of the heart, suffers his name to be used as the authority for dishonouring the most faithful of his servants, and because apprehensive of the fate of his papers, and fancying he is no longer able to protect the custodian of them, secretly puts him on his guard, and although he recommends him to save himself if he can, remains carelessly indifferent to what might befall him ; turns to his ambassador, admits him into the secret as the sole alternative that presents itself for ensuring himself from being compromised, directs him to secure the papers, to keep their existence and his possession of them a profound secret, and retain them until such time as he shall return to France, when he is to deliver them in person ; this ambassador being the very man who, from the beginning, was the confidant and tool of de Pompadour and de Praslin, and against whose acquisition of the royal documents the plenipotentiary had long and successfully struggled, braving the hostility of ministers until he had effected his own ruin.

Had D'Eon been so inclined he might, solitary outcast as he was, have constituted himself master of the

situation, and dictated his own terms. Offers amounting to forty thousand pounds were now made, if he would say what he knew regarding the late peace. Lords Bute, Egremont, and Halifax, the Duke of Richmond, Count Viri, and even the Princess of Wales, were accused, in the general excitement, of having received bribes from the French Court for their share in the negotiations; so great indeed was the popular indignation against the Duke of Bedford, who had conducted them at Versailles as the King's ambassador, that he seldom dared to appear in the streets of London, where he had been hissed, and worse might have befallen him. It was believed, and with good reason, that the Chevalier D'Eon was in a position to settle any doubts on the matter, and it was sought to take advantage of his abandoned and penniless situation by tempting him with plenty; but the love of lucre was not a trait in the Chevalier's character. 'I am intractable as regards my honour,' he wrote more than once; and even though his royal master, for whom he was enduring all things, should forsake him in time of greatest need, he loved his country too well to expose it to danger and to the scorn of the world, by betraying the King.

No sooner had the Chevalier received from M. Nort the Count de Broglio's letter and substantial succour from the King—for it should be remembered that his emoluments and pension were stopped—than, brimful of emotion, and believing that in this material assistance he saw fresh earnest of interest in his behalf on the part of the monarch, now no longer trammelled by de Pompadour,<sup>1</sup> he expressed his heartfelt gratitude in these words:—

<sup>1</sup> The Marquise de Pompadour died April 15, 1764, 'd'une maladie de cœur,' says Guizot.



‘Sire,—I am innocent, and have been condemned by your ministers; but from the moment that your Majesty wishes it, I place my life, and the recollection of every outrage I have experienced from the Count de Guerchy, at your Majesty’s feet. Be persuaded, Sire, that I will die your faithful subject. . . .’

His behaviour was very different towards the Count de Broglio, in whose letter he found no reference whatever to his contentions with de Guerchy; his solicitations for redress against the injuries he had suffered at the hands of the ambassador remained unheeded, nor was there one word of encouragement that might be construed into probable consideration of the services he had rendered, privately to the King, and to his country. It simply contained a proposition that he should surrender the papers in his possession for a sum of money not stated, and as to his prospects in the future, they were left undetermined. He returned the count’s letter to Nort, under cover of a written declaration that he refused to consider it.

‘I gave him to understand that I was not being dealt with fairly, that the turn the count was pleased to give to my affairs, in connection with the King, was by no means agreeable to me, and not in the least in conformity with facts and with the consequences of the secret order of June 3, 1763, and secret instructions relating thereto, which had obliged me not to take my leave at an audience, but to remain in London. The count passes over, with inconceivable indifference, the complaints I have laid at the foot of the throne against M. de Guerchy, treating them as petty quarrels, money matters, delicate questions to arrange, when he conscientiously knew the contrary to be the case. . . . I was being innocently sacrificed to policy and expediency. The count was leaving me, like the goat in the fable, at the bottom of the well into which the King’s and his own political orders, and the mutual hatred of the Broglis and Guerchiens had cast me; but I was delighted to see him, like the fox, climb on to my shoulders to escape from exile, and out

of the precipice in which I remained, awaiting with confidence and steadiness the pleasure of God and the King.'<sup>1</sup>

The French ambassador having been advised that the language employed in the Introduction to the 'Lettres, Mémoires,' &c. was libellous, immediately instituted proceedings against D'Eon, in which he was supported by the whole diplomatic corps in London.<sup>2</sup> The trial<sup>3</sup> was pending, and D'Eon, deserted and friendless, was careful to keep himself armed at all points, so far as lay in his power, against the coming struggle. He was satisfied that, provided he had custody of the papers, he was comparatively safe from any very great harm. Nort had brought to him no promise of protection, at a time that his liberty was in hourly peril; he should therefore continue to keep the papers until security of his person was guaranteed to him. Finding it impossible to treat with the Chevalier, Nort returned to Paris from his bootless errand, defeated and empty-handed.

'Were you in my place,' wrote D'Eon to de Broglie, 'you would not do otherwise . . . nothing in the world will induce me to give up these papers, so long as M. de Guerchy is ambassador in England. Should his Majesty determine upon appointing you, Monsieur le Comte, or the marshal, as ambassador, I can truly assert that considering the marshal's great reputation in England, the affairs of France would at once take an entirely new direction. The action against me would break down, I should surrender my papers, and all would be well.'<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Mém. de la Chevalière D'Eon*, Ministère des affaires étrangères.—De Broglie, ii. 173.

<sup>2</sup> 'The foreign ministers agreed, as to be sure you have been told, to make Monsieur de Guerchy's *cause commune*.'—Walpole to the Earl of Hertford, April 20, 1764. See *Pièces Relatives*, &c. p. 218.

<sup>3</sup> 'I do not wish that any steps should be taken to arrest the judicial proceedings commenced.'—Louis XV. to Tercier, May 1, 1764. Boutaric, i. 322.

<sup>4</sup> May 15, 1764. *Mém. de la Chevalière D'Eon*.—De Broglie, ii. 174.

Apart from his action for libel, the ambassador caused yet another pamphlet to be written and published by Goudard<sup>1</sup> (who wrote, says D'Eon, *pro fame* rather than *pro fama*), a vicious criticism on the volume of 'Lettres, Mémoires,' &c. The Chevalier 'would not take the trouble to reply to this senseless rather than discriminating disquisition on his book, but availed himself of the opportunity afforded him on Easter Day, 1764, in chancing to meet Goudard in the Green Park, St. James', to give him a sound caning in the presence of several respectable witnesses, to which the mercenary scribe never made any answer;' and Goudard having boasted in a coffee-house that he had completely rebutted every argument advanced in the work, D'Eon gave out that since he had thus proved the vigorous nature of his jaw, he should borrow that ass's jaw whenever he would have to combat *des Philistins des Guerchiens et des chiens de Guerchy*.<sup>2</sup>

'My enemies maintain that I am ambitious and delight in honours only, and this they say, because I became Minister Plenipotentiary at an early age without having sought the rank. The fact is, I have never nourished in my heart other than that noble emulation which spurs a man on to action. During my military and political career I have always aspired to the highest rank, without any idea of injuring anybody, and without feelings of envy or jealousy. The spirit of emulation is not forbidden by any law, Divine or human. The oak that reaches to the sky and raises its branches to the clouds, had once been but an acorn in the bowels of the earth. If the grass and the neighbouring small trees were to complain to Jupiter against this oak, would their murmurs be regarded? Thus should it be with those men

<sup>1</sup> *Examen des Lettres, Mémoires, et Négociations Particulières du Chevalier D'Eon, Ministre Plénipotentiaire de France auprès du Roi de la Grande Bretagne, dans une Lettre à M. N—, 1764, pp. 52.* Goudard received twenty guineas from the ambassador for his work, and was arrested at the instance of Becket, printer, in the Strand, for non-payment of expenses!

<sup>2</sup> Ch. MSS.

who, born without common sense, unreasonably grudged me my elevation.' <sup>1</sup>

At the time of which we write, the trial of John Wilkes at the Old King's Court had already taken place, and the country was convulsed by what are known as the Wilkes' riots.

The Chevalier was increasing in popularity, 'for it is engraven in the hearts of the English to take part with the oppressed,' at a time that de Guerchy's conduct was not of a nature to gain for him the esteem of the ministers or people of England. He had come into disagreeable collision with the authorities, and found pleasure in persecuting several of his own countrymen in London,<sup>2</sup> who refused to be tyrannised over by him in a manner that was offending the sensibilities of the liberty-loving people amongst whom they lived, and especially at a time when that people believed they were engaged in a struggle for liberty, represented in their idol of the day—John Wilkes.

Some weeks previous to de Guerchy's arrival, D'Eon wrote to apprise him that he might rely upon exemption from duty in accordance with the privileges of an ambassador, on all such goods as he might require to pass into the country, provided it was indisputably shown that they were for his sole use and benefit. The abuse of this privilege upon more occasions than one, after his arrival in England, called forth a strong remonstrance from the department concerned, to which de Guerchy replied by the assertion of privilege; the matter was consequently referred to the Lords of the Treasury, who terminated the discussion by informing

<sup>1</sup> Oh. MSS.

<sup>2</sup> De Guerchy's treatment of D'Eon de Moulaise, lieutenant of cavalry, a cousin of D'Eon, one of the secret agents sent by Louis XV. to watch over the safety of the Chevalier and his papers, was scandalous and cruel.

Lord Halifax that their lordships would not enter into the consideration of all that had passed on the subject since his Excellency's arrival, although, if it were necessary, they could produce instances which would be sufficient to convince his lordship that their officers were not to be charged with any unusual strictness in their treatment of his Excellency; neither would they enforce the necessity of the exact observance of the laws, or the propriety of the orders lately given for the strict execution of them, showing the many and notorious abuses which had been committed under pretence of the privilege; for they were only desirous to prevent the evil for the future, and not to complain of what was past.<sup>1</sup>

Upon another occasion, three constables were sent to the French Embassy to arrest the ambassador's 'gentleman of the horse,' for having threatened the life of a woman and to set her house on fire, when the ambassador caused the gate to be closed, his servants assaulted the constables and confined them, and he himself tore up the warrant they presented. This outrage was followed up by de Guerchy's complaint of the violation of the privileges of an ambassador, in the attempt to arrest his *écuyer* within the court-yard of his Excellency's house. The law officers of the Crown having been consulted, the Foreign Secretary informed the King's ambassador at the French Court that—

'the Attorney-General was doubtful whether the ambassador's privileges had been violated, but it was clear that his Excellency's conduct in the transaction had been highly improper and illegal.'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Lords of the Treasury to Lord Halifax, May, 1, 1784.—*France Correspondence*, Public Record Office.

<sup>2</sup> Lord Halifax to Lord Hertford, July 5, 1784.—*France Correspondence*, Public Record Office.

It was George III.'s birthday (June 4), and de Guerchy being recognised in the streets was insulted, and the windows of the Embassy were broken.

'M. de Guerchy maintains that it is I who excited the people, because they rather like me, and publicly drink my health and that of Wilkes. Nothing is more false.'

Writing to Tercier upon these events, D'Eon says :—

'De Guerchy has written to tell his friend (de Praslin) that I have threatened to thrust him out of the sanctuary afforded him by the embassy, which he profanes. This is absolutely false, but were it even true, is it not still more true that he has openly violated the dignity of the position confided to him by the King—(1) in causing a detachment of grenadiers to be summoned to arrest me, a minister of France, and in whose house? In that of the minister of the King of England. (2) In causing me to be poisoned, two days later, at his own table, to which he had invited me; (3) in wishing to pass me off for a lunatic; (4) in converting the embassy into a store for contraband goods. If our Lord chastised the Scribes and Pharisees, if He scourged the dealers out of the temple, if our holy father the Pope justly fulminates against the enemies and profaners of things sacred, does not de Guerchy deserve to be driven back all the way to Dover at a gallop, with a whip made of ass's hide? I have read in the papers that the King has sent into the Gévaudan M. Antoine with a good pack of harriers to take the wild beast of Gévaudan.<sup>2</sup> I entreat you to represent to him that it would be worthy of his good heart to send hither a second M. Antoine, with a good pack of hounds, to drive out of England the Count de Guerchy, a thousand times more cruel and more dangerous than the monster of Gévaudan. Indeed, I cannot conceive how it is that the English, who have destroyed all the wolves in England, suffer this new man-wolf to exist in their midst.'<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> D'Eon to the Count de Broglie, June 8, 1764.—Ministère des affaires étrangères. De Broglie, ii. 175.

<sup>2</sup> When in Paris Walpole saw this beast, which he declared to be a wolf of enormous proportions.

<sup>3</sup> Ch. MSS. 480.

The spies and officers of police sent by the French minister and acting under the directions of de Guerchy, continued to watch every movement of the Chevalier, who they no doubt still hoped to kidnap, as had been the Marquis de Fratteau<sup>1</sup> some years previously. Five were lodged in Gerrard Street, close to Brewer Street, where he resided. His precautions he describes to an old friend, Captain Pommard, in Paris. When he went out, as he did daily, it was with all the vigilance a captain of dragoons should observe in time of war. His own spies were about. He had met his enemies, and had any attempt been made against his person, they would have been cut to pieces by the party he led. Every evening he reconnoitred at Ranelagh and Vauxhall; but acts of violence were not to be apprehended in England, and he was more on his guard against the stratagems of those with whom he was unacquainted, and of his false and therefore dangerous friends. That French emissaries were actually on the look-out to seize the Chevalier and carry him off to France in a vessel appointed for the purpose, does not appear to have been generally credited in London, judging by the obituary notices which appeared in the newspapers, where it is stated that if the Chevalier was not the author of the reports to

<sup>1</sup> This was a singular case of kidnapping. The Marquis de Fratteau had been carried out of France and imprisoned in Spain on account of some family quarrel, but having made his escape, he fled to England. On March 27, 1752, a marshal's court officer called at his apartments in London, and presented a writ. Having consulted the French pastor, who recommended him to go quietly, since some mistake had surely been made, he did so. Upon his disappearance becoming known, Justice Fielding granted a warrant on the supposition that the marquis was murdered, and an application was also made to prevent his being carried out of the kingdom. It was all to no purpose, for he was put on board of a small vessel at Gravesend, conveyed to Calais where he was landed during the night of the 29th, and thence sent on to the Bastille.—*Scots Magazine*, xiv. 212.

that effect, he at any rate believed in them.<sup>1</sup> Were official confirmation of the plan for his abduction needed, it is to be found in de Guerchy's handwriting, and in the instructions he asks, under date June 23, 1764, as to whether D'Eon is to be seized before or after his trial for libel.

The Chevalier's case met with a good deal of sympathy, which found its way into the papers, and exhibited itself in anonymous letters cautioning him to be wary against his countrymen. His unknown correspondents recommended him to withdraw to Oxford, Bath, or other distant town, taking care not to allow even his most discreet friend to know the time of his departure or his destination.

' . . . The people are already agitated, and favourably, in your behalf, and the greater the agitation the more will the people be on the *qui vive* to protect you against any kind of abduction, by stratagem or by force. Even the ministry will be obliged, in the interests of the public, to watch against any such attempts as are contrary to the rights of persons and the laws of the country. . . . '

He should not leave his house unless accompanied by some trustworthy person who spoke English and knew London well, and he should never think of going out at night. . . . Were any scoundrel sufficiently rash and villainous to dare to attack him, he should pitilessly shoot him or cut him in two with his sword.<sup>2</sup> That the Chevalier would have killed the first man who dared to lay hands upon him was no bombast on his part. He had written to Lord Mansfield, to the Earl of Bute, Mr. Pitt, and Earl Temple, to represent what were the designs of the French ambassador, the risk he hourly incurred of being kidnapped, and to seek their advice.

<sup>1</sup> *The Times*, May 26, 1810, and old newspapers.

<sup>2</sup> Ch. MSS.



He informed Lord Mansfield that he did not contract any debts, and avoided everything that could possibly lead him to an infringement of the laws. If, therefore, the law would appear to arm itself against his liberty, he must necessarily conclude it did so under a false pretence, being won over by the hatred of his enemies to deliver him to them. Such being the case, might he presume to ask his lordship, he who was the administrator of those laws which but interpreted primitive and natural laws, might he presume to inquire whether the necessity for self-defence did not place him in the position of repelling force by force? He ventured to think that his lordship's heart contemplated such extreme measures with dread; but his equity, as was natural, would readily forgive any evils resulting therefrom. Such was his position, which he was obliged to bring to notice, in the hope that his lordship's equity would offer some counsel that he was able to follow, and which should be equally in conformity with the requirements for his safety and with the laws of a country he loved and to which he owed so much.

Towards the end of June, the Chevalier received notice of the charges upon which he was to be tried, and a summons to appear on July 9, that being the end of Trinity term. He made an affidavit asking for adjournment to another term, to enable him to produce four witnesses who had been expelled the country by orders of the French ambassador. His application was refused, and it being simply impossible for his counsel, who knew nothing of French, to read and digest in the course of eight days his book of six hundred pages in quarto, he made up his mind not to appear. The trial came on before Lord Chief Justice Mansfield at the King's Bench bar on the day appointed,

upon information filed against him by the King's command, as author of a libel on the Count de Guerchy, and in default was found guilty.<sup>1</sup>

D'Eon disappeared, and although not readily found, was by no means idle, for in this same month, July, the Marquis de Blosset, in diplomatic charge during de Guerchy's absence on leave,<sup>2</sup> made application to Lord Halifax that the Chevalier might be compelled to cease printing certain papers which he believed to be the 'Négotiations,' in which his cousin, D'Eon de Moulouise, and M. la Rochette were also concerned. The English minister replied that it was impossible to stop the printing of books when the subject was not known, and on suspicion only;<sup>3</sup> and here the matter dropped. After a time, a clue having been obtained to the Chevalier's place of concealment, the Solicitor-General was consulted on the legality of force being employed for arresting him and bringing him to the bar of the Court of King's Bench to receive sentence upon the conviction. Sir Henry Norton gave it as his opinion that the officer having the paper process of the Court of King's Bench for apprehending the Chevalier D'Eon, was thereby authorised and might legally break open the doors of a house though within the verge of the Court or of any other house, in order to take the Chevalier, if, upon request, the doors of such house should be refused to be opened; and it being believed that the house in which D'Eon was secreted stood within the verge of the Court, the Solicitor-General ruled that any objection on that account might be easily obviated by

<sup>1</sup> *Gentleman's Magazine*, vol. xxxiv. and old newspapers.

<sup>2</sup> De Guerchy left for France under pretence of reviewing the regiment of which he was colonel.

<sup>3</sup> *France Correspondence*, Public Record Office.

a proper application for the purpose.<sup>1</sup> No time was lost, and on the evening of the same day, November 20, a house in Scotland Yard, Whitehall, occupied by a Mr. Eddowes, was entered by an officer and five men, who said they had come with orders to seek and arrest, or take, dead or alive, the Chevalier D'Eon. They spent an hour on the premises, bursting open every door, not excepting even that of the room in which Mr. Eddowes, many years bed-ridden, was lying; and they were about to force open a closet and bureau, but that Mrs. Eddowes cautioned them against so doing, as the room contained papers and money belonging to the King. D'Eon was nowhere about the house, and she had not seen him for more than two months. The officer, whose conduct had been outrageous, then left with the search party.<sup>2</sup>

Having absconded from justice and failed to surrender himself to the Court of King's Bench to receive judgment, the Chevalier was in due course, that is to say, on June 13, 1765, declared to be outlawed by judgment of the coroners for the county of Middlesex.<sup>3</sup>

The story must go back a few pages, that we may become the better acquainted with Treyssac de Vergy with whom we parted at the door of D'Eon's back premises, through which he was ignominiously made to pass on the morning of October 27, 1763, when he had presented himself to settle an affair of honour pending between himself and the Chevalier. Whatever the latter's hiding-place for several months after his conviction, it is very certain that de Vergy found him out the

<sup>1</sup> *France Correspondence*, Public Record Office.

<sup>2</sup> *Scots Magazine*, vol. xxvi.; from London papers.

<sup>3</sup> *Gentleman's Magazines*, vol. xxxv. It was absurdly reported that D'Eon was to be delivered to France in exchange for Wilkes.

following September, and to his great astonishment favoured him one day with a call. Smitten with remorse and driven by despair, de Vergy had a confession to make which throws all the light needed on the designs of the triumvirate at Paris against the liberty and life even of the Chevalier D'Eon.

'You must be surprised, sir, at this visit,'—D'Eon admitted he was, greatly so—'but when you are acquainted with the reason for it, I hope I shall regain in your estimation some of the respect I justly forfeited upon the occasion of our last interview. I am a miserable wretch, and you will greatly despise me for all I am about to say, unless you give me credit for the remorse I feel and the heroic repentance which compels me to speak. May my latest acts make amends for the past!'

De Vergy then placed before the Chevalier the necessary papers to prove his identity, as he promised he should do in the declaration he had signed when they last met. He described himself as being a man of good birth, an advocate of the parliament of Bordeaux, and son-in-law to the Baroness Fagan; but having squandered his own and his wife's fortune in riotous living, had tried his hand at literature, and published, in 1762, a work entitled '*Les Usages*,' which brought him into favour with the Count d'Argental, not altogether, perhaps, the most desirable of patrons; still, he was an intimate friend of de Praslin, and as de Vergy was a candidate for any employment he could get, his friends advised him to stick to the count, since he had chanced to please him. De Vergy did so, and asked for his interest with de Praslin to obtain a nomination as consul or secretary of Embassy, which resulted in an introduction to de Guerchy, the new ambassador to London, through whom he was informed he might possibly obtain the secretaryship of Embassy, in the room of D'Eon, who

had given displeasure at Court. De Guerchy referred him to d'Argental, and the latter, in a somewhat long interview they had, told de Vergy that he might have to pay for such an appointment, in case of need, with personal courage and blind devotion to the orders of the Count de Guerchy.

'I have made myself responsible to M. de Guerchy for your discretion, and have assured him that you will fall in with his views, and that you will serve him as readily with your sword as with your pen, according to circumstances.'

'I cannot understand that a secretary of Embassy need resort to the first.'

'You do not know but that you may find yourself in a position to have to do so.'

'I do not understand this mystery ; pray, sir, explain yourself.'

'Do you know D'Eon ?'

'No, sir.'

'They are displeased with him at Court.'

'Am I to be specially instructed on this point ?'

'He must be ruined.'

'But is he not already ruined, since he has incurred displeasure at Court ?'

'It is not this . . . it is something else . . . '

'I do not understand you.'

'It is necessary that he should commit himself so seriously. . . '

'But how is this to be managed ?'

'I cannot say.'

'I think, sir, you should express yourself more clearly.'

'I thought you understood me.'

'It is really difficult to do so.'

'Well, then, M. de Guerchy is under orders to bring D'Eon into disgrace ; but a stranger and a skilful hand must do this.'

'Do you mean to say, sir, that the man about to replace him should commit a base action ?'

'I do not mean anything ; you misunderstand me. . . '

An awkward silence of some moments ensued, and the count,

rising from his chair and steadily eyeing de Vergy, said, 'I was under the impression, de Vergy, that you were ambitious, and that you were to be relied upon.'

'You are not mistaken, sir, but I cannot stray from what I owe to honour and to my name.'

'But you are not required to do anything wrong, only lend yourself to whatever may arise, and take honourable advantage of it. Go to London, await there the ambassador, and see him when he arrives. The secretaryship is yours, but you will have to make yourself worthy of it. You are clever, and I have explained myself.'

De Vergy went on to say that he was persuaded from this ambiguous language and the few words de Guerchy had said to him, that he was required to take part in some machinations, but to what end he could not conceive. He explained his dilemma to d'Argental, who put him at his ease by assuring him that he had nothing to fear, and as he was literally starving, he overcame his scruples and consented to leave for England where he preceded de Guerchy by several weeks. He was to assist in encompassing the ruin of D'Eon, and through him of the Count de Broglio; he was to spread reports injurious to the Chevalier's reputation; if possible, to pick a quarrel with him, and write a pamphlet to his prejudice. It was thus that advantage was to be taken of his necessitous situation. It was his conscience, not his courage, that made him wince whilst doing the will of the ambassador, and when he had said to the Chevalier the evening they met at the Embassy, *You do not know the fate that awaits you in France*, it was his conscience that spoke and would warn him, and had the Chevalier replied in an encouraging and conciliatory manner, de Vergy would have confessed all to him. But he was depending upon the Count de Guerchy for his very existence.

‘At five-and-twenty,’ he said, ‘the stomach is an integral part of the conscience. It has a deliberative voice in its internal decisions, and when to its sharp cry is added the hoarse and hollow sound from the bowels, their voices united generally have the preponderance.’

‘I could not help laughing,’ notes D'Eon, ‘at this theory in explanation of the verdict of our conscience, and de Vergy laughed quite as heartily.’

‘The more pliable to his will did the ambassador find me,’ continued de Vergy, ‘the more exacting did he become. After having in vain attempted many things against you, even to poisoning (for let me tell you, sir, that you were poisoned with opium; I know it from the ambassador himself, and I now tell you so), it was proposed that I should waylay and assassinate you. This infamous proposition was made to me at a moment when all the money I had borrowed for my current expenses was exhausted, and not having as yet received anything from the ambassador, I was in the greatest distress. I had given promissory notes to my landlord for lodging and board since my arrival in London, notes I hoped to meet with the salary I expected to receive. Their term had expired, and unless the money was forthcoming I was in danger of imprisonment. The Count de Guercy knew this, and offered me a purse with one hand, and with the other—a dagger. I rejected the purse and the dagger. I am a wretch, a villain if you will, but not an assassin. In a few days I was arrested and imprisoned for debt. In vain did I appeal to him who made me leave France and attach myself to his service. My entreaties and my threats were equally powerless. The first he rejected because he made sure of your being carried off by the men sent for the purpose, and I could therefore no longer be of use to him; he scorned the latter, because I was in confinement and precluded from doing him harm. But if I could no longer see and speak to him, I was at least free to write, and I did so. Having heard of the action against you, I prepared, whilst in prison, a “*Lettre aux Français*”<sup>1</sup> in your vindication. The printing of it was

<sup>1</sup> *Lettre aux Français, par M. Treysac de Vergy, en réponse à une Note,*

secretly undertaken by Haberkorn of Grafton Street, when a fellow-prisoner betrayed me. My manuscript was taken from the printer in virtue of an order from the Chevalier Norton, and your judge, Lord Mansfield. A warrant was issued for my removal to Newgate, where I should have found myself amongst thieves and murderers; but thanks to the assistance of my relatives and friends I obtained my liberty, and the first use I make of it is to place myself at your service. The Count de Guerchy has broken the engagements by which he was in honour bound to me, and released me from mine. His Excellency has dared to summon you before the tribunals; make any use you please in self-defence of the disclosures I have made. I am at your disposal. I will admit my own faults, and prove your innocence in London, Paris, or Versailles, over the whole earth if necessary. Happy, indeed, shall I be to make reparation, by some little good, for a part of the injury I have caused you!’

‘Are you prepared,’ inquired D’Eon, deeply impressed by these revelations, ‘to affirm and attach your signature to all you have been saying to me?’

‘I am prepared to affirm the same, before God and man, to sign with my hand and seal with my blood.’

‘Very well, M. de Vergy. Do you recollect my last words to you on October 27, 1763. “If you prove to me that you are an honest man, I will be the best of your friends.” You have given me this proof, and henceforth I will keep my word.’ D’Eon took his hand, and the young man’s eyes filled with tears.

‘My friends wish me to return to Paris; I have no means of existence in London, but I will get on as best I can, and remain with you until the time of your trial.’

‘Be it so. You shall share my bread with me.’

Indeed, D’Eon had nothing but a piece of bread to offer, being himself in sore need; a refugee from the world! <sup>1</sup>

*Contre-Note, etc., et servant à la justification de M. D’Eon: Londres, 16 Décembre, 1763.*

*Dicere verum quis vetat,  
Spectatum admissi risum teneatis amici?*

Londres: Se vend chez W. Nicoll, St. Paul’s Churchyard.

<sup>1</sup> *Seconde Lettre à Monseigneur le Duc de Choiseul, Ministre et Secrétaire*



Whilst preparing his 'Lettre aux Français' for the press, de Vergy enclosed extracts to de Guerchy, and threatened its immediate publication unless his Excellency would consent to buy it off by sending him the sum of eighty guineas and granting him some other favours, and he employed an attorney named Grojan to call at the Embassy, receive the money, and give a receipt for it. Such, at least, was de Guerchy's statement, eventually unsupported as will appear in the sequel; but this circumstance being brought to the notice of Lord Halifax, the matter was placed in the hands of the Solicitor-General, by whom it was submitted that de Vergy's attempt to extort money from the French ambassador by threats and vilifying his Excellency and his Court if his demands were not complied with, was highly criminal, and he might be legally prosecuted for the same, either by indictment or by information in the name of his Majesty's Attorney-General, and if convicted upon the trial would be brought to condign punishment. Lord Halifax immediately instructed the Attorney-General to prosecute M. de Vergy by way of information in his name, and at the expense of the King, giving at the same time notice to this effect to the French ambassador.<sup>1</sup> Actions for libel, however, were of such ordinary occurrence at this period of social disorder, that as many as two hundred informations were filed against printers and others in the course of the year.

*d'Etat en France; par M. Treysac de Vergy, Avocat au Parlement de Bordeaux. 'Solventur risu tabulae, tu missus abibis.' Hor.—1764, pp. 38.* De Vergy was sworn before William Bridgen Major, Lord Mayor of London, by George Schuts, Notary Public, on October 11, 1764, that he was the author of two letters in manuscript addressed to the Duke de Choiseul—which letters, with the attestations of the Lord Mayor and Notary Public, were afterwards published for general circulation.

<sup>1</sup> *France Correspondence*, Public Record Office.

## CHAPTER X.

D'Eon challenges the French ambassador—Institutes legal proceedings against him—Strong appeal to the Count de Broglio and indifference of the latter—De Guerchy *v.* De Vergy—De Vergy's affidavits—Secret correspondence in danger—Undignified conduct of Louis XV., who 'feels he is in a mess'—True bill against the French ambassador for inciting to murder—D'Eon's disregard of his King's intervention—De Guerchy applies for a *nolle prosequi*—Attorney-General refuses a certificate—Miscarriage of justice, and state of public feeling—Count de Broglio's conciliatory proposals—A royal pension conferred on D'Eon—De Broglio's advice—D'Eon surrenders his secret orders from the King.

PROVIDED with de Vergy's statement in writing and bearing his signature, the first step taken by the Chevalier was to call upon de Guerchy to settle their differences by recourse to arms, as became two soldiers. The latter objected to draw swords with a fencing-master. The Chevalier observed he was right, and proposed, to ensure perfect equality, that the ambassador should choose his own fire-arms and they should fight on horse-back, if he objected to do so on foot; and further intimated to him, through his seconds, that if he promised to meet him on the ground with a good grace, he gave his word of honour, privately, that he should wound him only; whereas de Guerchy would be at liberty to do his worst. The count's reply to this was that D'Eon must be a fool to suppose a general would agree to fight a simple captain of dragoons, which persuaded the Chevalier that it would be as impossible for such a man to perform an act of courage and of justice, as it is to extract oil from stones. De Guerchy

could not be prevailed upon to fight ! Then, 'out of consideration for the Court of France and for the count's family, D'Eon was careful to lay at the feet of his august master his private wrongs on the subject of poisoning, assassination, kidnapping, and other not generally known dark designs against his honour, his life, his person, and his papers. This he did before appealing to the tribunals of England for that liberty and the safety of his person and papers which the law could ensure to him.' It does not appear that Louis XV. took any notice of these representations, and D'Eon determined on having de Guerchy prosecuted for a craven-hearted criminal, and he took proceedings accordingly.

A copy of de Vergy's deposition was sent to the Duke de Choiseul, and another to the Count de Broglio under cover of one of the most pitiful of appeals.

'London, November 2, 1764.

'Sir,—I have the honour to enclose for your sole informa-

'The horrible plot is at last disclosed. I can now say to M. de Guerchy what the Prince de  
tion, copy of my last letter to the Duke de Choiseul, and of that

Conti said to the Marshal de Luxembourg before the battle of Steenkerque: "Sangaride! this is a great  
of M. de Montmorin, Bishop of Langres, who is intimately ac-  
day for you my cousin! You will be a fine fellow if you get out of the mess!" None are more con-  
quainted with my family, and has known me since childhood.

cerned than you and the marshal, in employing all means for protecting yourselves against the  
He is good enough to employ his interest in my behalf with the  
enemies of your house. The King cannot but be persuaded now of the truth; it is as clear as day-  
Dauphin, who has great regard for him. I am aware that the

light. I am taking my own measures. I have informed the Duke of York and his brothers of the  
Bishop of Langres is a strong partisan of the marshal; you may  
truth and atrociousness of the conspiracy against you, the Marshal de Broglio, and myself. They will  
therefore, sir, recommend my case to the Bishop with perfect

in 'form the King, the Queen, and the Princess of Wales. M. de Guerchy, who has been unfavourably

<sup>1</sup> The interlineations were in sympathetic ink.

safety, and he will be delighted to support your good-will in my  
received since his return,<sup>1</sup> is disturbed beyond conception, notwithstanding his audacity, and I know  
behalf. I have the honour to be, with profound respect,

that the King of England is disposed to be just towards the marshal and myself. Do your part, do

Sir,

something and do not desert me as you seem to be doing. I will defend myself to the last drop of my

Your most humble,

blood, and fearlessly serve your house in spite of you ! You desert me ! You send me no money,

and most obedient servant,

whereas I am struggling in your behalf. Do not desert me and do not drive me to despair. Send me

D'EON.'

sufficient money to enable me to fight your battles and mine, unless you wish to be crushed under the  
weight of injustice. I have expended more than twelve hundred pounds in carrying on my war, and  
you send me nothing. It is abominable, and allow me to say that I should never have believed it ! ''

A long time had elapsed since the date of de Broglio's last letter to the Chevalier, and now his reply was laconic enough. He declined, in the future, to submit to the King any of his letters in which allusion was made to de Guerchy, but he would take extracts and show them to his Majesty. D'Eon remained puzzled at this system of neutrality, having noticed that the very dispatches which informed him that any reference he might make to his squabbles with de Guerchy should not be seen by the King, were approved with the own hand of the sovereign, who must consequently have been aware of the correspondence on this particular subject being concealed from him.

The reports on the threatening attitude assumed by D'Eon and the probable use he would make of de Vergy's deposition, caused no little alarm in the mind of de Guerchy and at the French Court. It became a matter of greater moment than ever to the ambassador that he should rid himself of the hateful Chevalier, and he urged upon Lord Halifax, in pressing terms, that de Vergy,

<sup>1</sup> The French ambassador had been in France on leave of absence.

<sup>2</sup> Boutaric, i. 322.

who was making common cause with D'Eon, should be prosecuted as his lordship stated might be done. To his old friend de Praslin he represented that nothing in D'Eon's past villainous conduct could be compared to his latest fabrications, which were enough to make one shudder. De Praslin (?) and de Choiseul were so firmly persuaded of de Vergy's criminality, that they angrily complained to Lord Hertford of the difficulty de Guerchy and they experienced in obtaining justice in England; to which they received assurances that the measures pursued and pursuing against D'Eon and de Vergy, were fully sufficient to repair the insult offered to the King of France in the person of his representative; but scarcely had this explanation been given than the impatient de Guerchy, apprehensive and insecure, importuned the English minister to take steps against de Vergy in accordance with the opinion of the Attorney-General. This affair, however, eventually fell to the ground. De Guerchy failed to make out his case, and was in the end informed by Lord Halifax that the affidavits made did not suffice for entering an action.<sup>1</sup>

De Vergy had, in the meantime, made other depositions upon oath, in which he gave 'a true and circumstantial account of the plot against the life of the Chevalier D'Eon'—the one on November 12, before Judge Wilmot, of the Court of King's Bench; the other on November 27, before Judge Yates, also of the Court of King's Bench; and he sent a report of his proceedings to the Duke de Choiseul, dated November 15.

' . . . Last Monday, I made an affidavit at the King's Bench against M. de Guerchy, and proved by his words and certain circumstances to which I swore, that he ordered me to assassinate M. D'Eon, assuring me that the opium he had caused

<sup>1</sup> *France Correspondence*, Public Record Office.

to be given to him at dinner, on Friday, October 28, had had no effect. This circumstance was made known at the time by M. D'Eon's complaint to his Excellency himself, that he had been poisoned at his table. In meeting this charge by saying that I am mad, that I have lost my senses, M. de Guerchy condemns himself, and if I am flattered at the compliment, believe, sir, in my regret at not being able to return it. I show myself in London publicly. I am to be seen everywhere, at the promenades, at the play, in coffee-houses ; yet M. de Guerchy does not sue me before the law. Do you know, sir, the reason why ? Because by the law of retaliation and English justice, M. de Guerchy not having it by any means in his power to convict me of making false statements, would have the honour of being sent to the pillory and transported, were he to accuse me of perjury.'<sup>1</sup>

De Guerchy's hour of retribution was at hand, and the Chevalier was satisfied. Louis XV., ever selfish and unconcerned, but ill concealed his uneasiness at the serious aspect of affairs, and gladly approved of the Count de Broglio's offer to proceed to London and bring D'Eon to his senses, to arrange with him for the surrender of the compromising papers, and mediate between him and his tormentor. One difficulty presented itself to the King, who asked Tercier : ' On what plea is the despatch of the Count de Broglio to England to be proposed to M. de Praslin ? '—but ere this new design could be matured it had to be abandoned, an awkward incident that had the effect of seriously disturbing the King's equanimity, having well-nigh led to disclosures which would certainly have unravelled the mystery of the long- and well-maintained secret.

D'Eon's valet, a man named Hugonnet, had been for some time employed carrying despatches on the King's secret service between the two countries. Long

<sup>1</sup> *France Correspondence*, Public Record Office.

suspected of being engaged in this duty, orders were issued by the ministry to the police at Calais to watch for him, and arrest him if they at any time found sufficient cause. On January 10, as he was preparing to return to England, he was taken up, and in his possession was found a letter in the hand-writing of M. Drouet, private secretary to the Count de Broglio. It was intended, ostensibly, for D'Eon de Mouloise in London, bore no signature, but contained the names of Tercier and Durand, and allusions to the Counsellor, the deputy, &c. Drouet was in consequence also arrested and his papers seized, and the two were lodged in the Bastille. Being kept promptly informed by de Broglio of what was passing, and fearing that all was surely about to be discovered, Louis XV. resorted to the only expedient left to him—to secure the co-operation in his cause of the officials in charge of the prisoners. He immediately sent for M. de Sartines,<sup>1</sup> officer of police, and had to endure the humiliation of admitting him into his confidence, and asking him to lay hold of all such papers as were likely to compromise, in the sight of his ministers, those of his secret agents he named.

‘I have unburdened myself and confided in him (de Sartines). He seemed pleased, and we must hope that his discretion and this mark of confidence will guide him aright. If we are disappointed, we will see what is to be done, and write to de Guerchy. Have your mind at ease.’

So wrote Louis XV. to Tercier; and again, in a day or two :—

‘I am afraid that we are getting into a mess. I have instructed M. de Sartines to send for you and see you secretly,

<sup>1</sup> Afterwards minister under Louis XVI.

and that you will give him the fullest particulars. . . . You cannot possibly be present at the investigation and the patching up of this business, but tell de Sartines everything, arrange matters with him, and let him make his report to me. . . . At the preliminary inquiry M. de Praslin said he treated them with contempt, but what passed between him and de Sartines should suffice to tranquillise you. . . . I am quite sure that Drouet is in a mess, but he will get out of it (I rather feel that I am getting somewhat into a mess).'<sup>1</sup>

De Sartines found himself painfully embarrassed at the peculiar position into which he was forced by the King, and showed no little diffidence and hesitation in his action. 'I find him a very timid man,' was de Broglio's remark to the sovereign, 'and yet I do not see what he has to fear, having received his master's orders.' Louis XV. was little apprehensive that the police officer would fail in his duty towards himself, for he had already received from him a bundle of recovered papers. Fortunately for the royal schemes in hand, de Praslin was at Versailles with the Court, and although he had announced his intention of being present at the examination of the prisoners, the day was not fixed. Advantage was taken of this respite by the sneaking monarch to corrupt yet another of his officials, so urgent was he in seeking to lift, at least his own self, out of the mire. His Majesty authorised M. Jumilhac, Governor of the Bastille, to admit Tercier to a conference with Drouet and Hugonnet, thereby requiring him to violate his trust! Every precaution was to be taken that Tercier might enter and leave the prison unnoticed, for fear that some busybody should carry the tale to the ministers. De Broglio was to appoint to each actor in the farce about to be played his part for misleading

<sup>1</sup> Boutaric, i. 334-337.



de Praslin. Drouet was to declare that he had been acting on his own responsibility and to oblige a friend; Hugonnet would insist that he was employed by Drouet, and by him alone, without reference to any other person; the titles had reference to certain friends of D'Eon; and, finally, de Sartines was to countenance these fanciful declarations and not conduct too searching an interrogatory. 'I have been at work for fifteen hours consecutively,' wrote de Broglie to the King, 'preparing material for the investigation, the replies to be given by the Sieur Drouet, the depositions to be made by Hugonnet, all of which will be in keeping with what has already transpired, and I have prepared a sort of interrogatory for M. de Sartines.'

'They are playing the fool with me!' said de Praslin to de Sartines, peevishly, as he went away at the close of the investigation, and on making his report the following day, Sunday, at a Cabinet Council, he insisted that Drouet had not been telling the whole truth.

'There is some truth in this!' observed the King, in communicating de Praslin's impressions to Tercier. 'Drouet is to undergo another examination, and will be discharged from prison towards the end of this week. Hugonnet will be detained a little longer, but I hope we see the end. Everything went off well at the council, and there was no distrust. I did not think it desirable to order Drouet's liberation, so as not to excite any suspicion.'<sup>1</sup>

Drouet did get away, having threatened to disclose everything if detained in durance, and so he had nothing for which to thank the King whom, as was the case with others, he was serving but too faithfully. Hugonnet's detention was a cruelly long one.

<sup>1</sup> Louis XV. to Tercier, January 14 to February 6, 1765. Boutaric, i. 334-339. De Broglie, ii. 188.

‘Could there be a greater act of despotism than that of detaining at the Bastille, for over a twelvemonth, the valet of the Chevalier D'Eon? . . . Guerchy had written to ask his friend Praslin to arrest Hugonnet; he distrained the effects the man had left behind, and refused to give them back until one hundred guineas had been paid to L'Escallier, his secretary; and further gave orders, that neither Hugonnet nor his wife should be allowed to attend the services at the chapel in the Embassy.’<sup>1</sup>

I have said that D'Eon was about to institute proceedings against the French ambassador on a criminal charge. Those proceedings had commenced and followed their course. De Guerchy was indicted on February 12, and on March 1, following, a true bill was found against him by the grand jury of Middlesex, at Hick's Hall, for a conspiracy against the life of the Chevalier D'Eon—a verdict that greatly perplexed the ministry; for, by the law of England, a person accused upon oath of any criminal offence must take his trial for the same when the bill of indictment is found against him by a grand jury; but by the law of nations, ambassadors are exempted from the ordinary forms of law in the countries where they are resident. The most eminent lawyers had been consulted, but the decision was left to the wisdom of the two courts.<sup>2</sup>

The Duke de Broglie asserts that ‘this audacious verdict was received in London with a sort of stupor;’ but if the English papers of the day are consulted, this will scarcely be found to have been the case, for de Guerchy was by no means a favourite with the general public. At Versailles, on the contrary, the sensation caused was immense. The Count de Broglie and M. de Beauvau talked themselves hoarse one evening in trying to make Hume<sup>3</sup> feel that, independently of the quality of

<sup>1</sup> Ch. MSS.

<sup>2</sup> *Gentleman's Magazine*, vol. xxxv.

<sup>3</sup> David Hume was doing duty as secretary of Embassy in Paris.

the accusers, and the little similarity in the depositions they had made, it was inconceivable that an ambassador could be subjected to any other jurisdiction than that of his own master. Hume kept repeating in reply that the laws of England in this respect were immutable, and that the authority of the King would not suffice to effect any alteration.<sup>1</sup>

The Chevalier sought to improve the occasion by sending what may be regarded as a note of intimidation :—

‘Considering the actual state of affairs, it is absolutely necessary that the arrangement<sup>2</sup> proposed by you should be at once concluded, and that you should be here without loss of time, say by the 20th of this month. This is the last letter I shall have the honour of writing to you on the subject of the poisoner, the villain Guerchy, who would have been broken alive on the wheel in France, did he meet with his deserts. But, thanks be to God, he will only be hanged in England, as was the case with Count de Sea in Cromwell’s time. . . . All the intriguing powers of France will not prevail in favour of Guerchy against the power of the laws of England, when their execution is confided to independent arbiters. I give you my word of honour, that very shortly Guerchy will be arrested as he leaves court, and taken to the prison for criminals in the city of London. His friend Praslin will come to deliver him, if he can; it is more likely that the friend to deliver him will be the executioner.’<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Count de Broglio to Louis XV., March 22, 1765. De Broglie, ii. 194.

<sup>2</sup> This arrangement requires explanation. At the time of the Hugonnet incident, de Broglio, full of concern lest the history of the secret correspondence, in which he was the most prominently concerned, should become generally known, and rather than that any such other accident should occur, expressed to the King his readiness to proceed to London, and to guarantee, by a mortgage on his own estates, the annual pension to D’Eon of 12,000 livres, by way of effectually obtaining from him the desired papers. Louis XV. had the meanness to approve of this security on his royal word, and this proposed settlement being communicated to the Chevalier, he readily acquiesced, save that he required the mortgage to extend to the estates of the countess, which were larger than those of her husband.

<sup>3</sup> D’Eon to the Count de Broglio, April 1, 1765. De Broglie, ii. 194.

D'Eon was satisfied that his bitter enemy was in his power, and had made up his mind that nothing should induce him to alter his determination to run him to earth. 'He should either triumph through the evidence in favour of his innocence and the strength of the laws, or know how to bear himself nobly on the scaffold.'

'When my good Louis XV. asked me not to hunt his ambassador to death, and that, for the honour of France, he should not be hanged in London, I replied to my august master : "I am ready to obey you in all things but this, for I am bound, before God and man, to have him hanged for the salvation of France, and it would be the duty of a most Christian King to assist me to hook on, and not unhook off, the forked gibbet, a notorious poisoner. If, Sire, you had had the courage to hang those who poisoned the Dauphin and Dauphiness,<sup>1</sup> I should not have been poisoned in London, nor would many others have been poisoned at Versailles, Paris, and elsewhere."'<sup>2</sup>

Writing to his son, in allusion to the subject that was engrossing the mind of the public throughout the kingdom, the Earl of Chesterfield<sup>3</sup> says :—

'You inquire about M. de Guerchy's affair, and I will give you as succinct an account as I can of so extraordinary and perplexed a transaction ; but without giving you my opinion of it by the common post. You know what passed at first between M. de Guerchy and M. D'Eon, in which both our ministers and M. de Guerchy, from utter inexperience in business, puzzled themselves into disagreeable difficulties. About three or four months ago, M. de Vergy published in a *brochure* a parcel of letters from himself to the Duke de Choiseul, in which he positively asserts that M. de Guerchy prevailed with him (Vergy) to come over into England to assassinate D'Eon. The words are, as well as I remember : 'Que ce n'était pas pour se servir

<sup>1</sup> The Duke and Duchess of Burgundy, father and mother of Louis XV., died of the measles (?) within six days of each other ; it was long believed they had been poisoned.

<sup>2</sup> Preamble to Will. Ch. MSS.

<sup>3</sup> Letter 387, April 22, 1765.

de sa Plume, mais de son Epée, qu'on le demandait en Angleterre.'<sup>1</sup>

Lord Chesterfield was wrong. De Vergy went to London to be secretary to de Guerchy, and was desired, solicited, commanded to assassinate D'Eon, not hired to do so, as the price for the appointment he coveted.

The indictment against de Guerchy was afterwards, in Easter term, at the instance of the Attorney-General, removed from the Old Bailey by writ of *certiorari* into the Court of King's Bench. The ambassador applied to the King for a *nolle prosequi*, and an order of reference was made to the Attorney-General, Sir Fletcher Norton, and the Solicitor-General, William de Grey, Esq., who issued summons on April 26, to the prosecutor and his witnesses, to attend at Lincoln's Inn at eight o'clock in the evening of the following Tuesday, the 30th, to show cause why the *nolle prosequi* should not be granted; and upon hearing counsel on both sides and witnesses, the proofs appeared so clear against de Guerchy, that the Attorney-General refused to certify to the King in favour of the ambassador or of a *nolle prosequi*, so that the indictment for the intended murder of the Chevalier D'Eon, minister plenipotentiary, undefended, undischarged, and open to further proceedings, remained on record among the archives as a lasting monument of the villainous designs of the French ambassador. A correspondent in a newspaper of the day observed that the verdict 'was a remarkable instance of the spirit of a grand jury of the city of London, as well as of fair administration of our laws.'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> D'Argental's words to de Vergy as they appear in the brochure, p. 25, are: 'Je l'ai assuré [de Guerchy] que vous vous prêteriez à ses projets; et que, suivant les circonstances, vous vous serviriez aussi bien de l'épée que de la plume.'

<sup>2</sup> *Political Register*, September 1767. *London Evening Post*, and other

‘Such a fact suffices of itself to characterise the justice and virtue of the young monarch and of his magistrates. No less honour is due to him than was due of old to Philip of Macedon, who, being besought by a courtier that his case should not be tried, very pertinently replied, that it was better the courtier should lose his suit than the King his reputation. . . . Tiberius declared before the Senate one day, during the first ten years that he reigned with justice, and not with tyranny : *Nec utendum imperio, ubi legibus agi posset*—and that the pardon of great criminals was more insupportable than their crimes. Salvien declares that the punishment of persons of distinction should be the more severe, inasmuch that besides being criminals, they dishonour their blood. The code of Westphalia expressly decrees that persons enjoying dignities, or who have been raised to the magistracy, should be executed on a gibbet seven feet higher than others.’<sup>1</sup>

The London papers testify to the public discontent at this miscarriage of justice, and when it became generally known that Chazal, the ambassador’s butler, suspected by D’Eon of having administered opium to him by direction of de Guerchy, at the Embassy dinner, had fled, leaving behind him his youthful wife to whom he had just been married, the people no longer hesitated to resort to violence. De Guerchy was mobbed whilst out driving, and owed his safety simply to the declaration that he was not indeed the French ambassador but only his secretary ; the crowd nevertheless followed the coach, and would have entered the court-yard of the Embassy had not the iron gates been immediately closed. Failing to reach his Excellency, the people somewhat relieved their feelings by breaking every window they were able to reach with missiles from the street.

old newspapers. The Duke de Broglie gives a different account of de Guerchy’s extication out of his difficulty.

<sup>1</sup> D’Eon to the Duke de Choiseul, July 4, 1767, published with *Dernière Lettre du Chevalier D’Eon à M. le Comte de Guerchy, &c.*

To the storm succeeded a calm. De Guerchy, too glad to get out of the way, proceeded on leave of absence, leaving in triumph the Chevalier, who spent the summer at Byfleet<sup>1</sup> in Surrey, where he was a welcome guest the chief part of the two succeeding years. When de Guerchy returned to England in the autumn, he found his way to London without receiving any of the honours that were strictly paid to the French King's ambassadors. Not a gun was fired, not a soldier was in attendance upon him, either at Dover or at Canterbury.<sup>2</sup>

Meeting D'Eon one day, Lord Lincoln said to him : 'How is it that the Count de Guerchy has again returned to weary us with his sad countenance?' 'Ma foi ! my Lord, indeed I cannot say. He must be like a top ; the more it is whipped the better it goes !'<sup>3</sup>

At this juncture, de Broglio bethought him of making fresh proposals to the Chevalier. He invited him to forget the past, to desist in the future from all allusion to de Guerchy, whether for good or for evil—to forget the action for libel—the trial for attempt to murder, &c. &c. ; and upon these conditions he should obtain the King's sanction to entrust him anew with the secret correspondence, whereby he would be required to report on the state of public opinion in England, and what the members of the opposition were about. This species of capitulation coming from no less a person than the Count de Broglio, served to swell still more the Chevalier's sense of his own importance, and he replied :—

'Your friendship for me is as great as my assurance in maintaining a secret correspondence in the position in which I

<sup>1</sup> The seat of Humphrey Cotes, Esq.

<sup>2</sup> Ch. MSS. 605.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* 298.

happen to be. You risk nothing in enlisting my zeal, whereas I risk a great deal in following the natural inclinations of my inviolable fidelity to the sacred person of his Majesty. But it is as sad, as it is inconceivable, that you should forbid me, in the name of the King, to complain of having been poisoned.'

D'Eon concluded by insisting that de Guerchy should be permanently recalled, and that in his stead should be appointed an ambassador to whose hands he might confidently entrust what he still held in his charge.<sup>1</sup>

But even before de Broglie's, had come a letter from Louis XV. D'Eon, ever generous towards the shortcomings of the monarch he adored, thus accounts for the King's having refrained from any kind of interference or expression of opinion during the period of his own grave strife with the ambassador:—

'I knew the man, and was not deceived in attributing this affected reserve to approbation that was not to be denied to me, but which was not either to be accorded to me. Louis XV. liked that his thoughts should be guessed. His silence was speech, it was necessary to know how to take it, and I was not long in finding out that I had conjectured rightly. On June 25, 1765, that is to say, some weeks after I had covered his ambassador in London with shame and infamy, his Majesty abruptly broke the silence he had been pleased to maintain for a time, and wrote to tell me that "he approved of my resuming and continuing with him my secret correspondence." On November 9 he sent word that he was "well pleased with me," and on December 4 that I was "an instrument useful to my country." These expressions of manifest satisfaction drew on one side, at last, the curtain that had so long concealed the royal thought. His Majesty crowned them with the greatest and most genuine testimony of his approbation, by sending to me soon afterwards the subjoined certificate, written entirely and signed with his

<sup>1</sup> July 22, 1765. De Broglie, ii. 198.



own hand, and which will be for me and my family the most eloquent and precious memorial of my innocence and loyalty.'

'As a reward for the services rendered to me by M. D'Eon in Russia, in my army, and in the execution of other trusts, I am pleased to bestow upon him a yearly allowance of twelve thousand livres, which I shall cause to be paid to him punctually at the expiration of every six months, wherever he may be, except in a country with which I am at war; and this until such time as I may think proper to nominate him to some post, the emoluments of which will greatly exceed the present allowance.

'LOUIS.'

'Versailles, April 1, 1766.'

'I, the undersigned, Minister Plenipotentiary of the King at this Court, hereby certify upon my honour and upon oath, that the above promise is really written and signed with the own hand of the King my master, whose orders I have received to deliver it to M. D'Eon.

'DURAND.'

'London, July 11, 1766.'

'With reference to this royal avowal,' continues D'Eon, 'the Count de Broglio wrote to me: "Your stay in England rendered necessary an extension of the King's generosity. But you will perceive that the proof he has himself been pleased to give you, and which remains in your keeping, will for ever be to you a glorious title-deed. . . . When your mind is at rest, and the noise you have made and are still making in the world will have subsided, we will see to arranging some plan whereby your services may prove still more useful to your country and to the best of masters. Conduct yourself prudently and wisely; win over the prejudiced; do not be minister or captain of dragoons any longer; give up the romantic; assume the attitude and speech of a quiet and sensible man—thus, and in course of time, your talents will be remembered, your old friends will return to you, your enemies will forget you, and your master will find a subject worthy of serving him, and worthy of the benefits he has already conferred upon him. Like yourself, and even more than yourself, I have experienced reverses; I have felt that it was quite possible for a private individual to be sacri-

ficed in the general vortex ; I have never supposed that this would entail the principal misfortune, that of incurring the just displeasure of his Majesty. I have ever had confidence in his justice and goodness, and I am fortunate enough to experience the effects of this at present. . . . With an honest heart and a spirit a little daring, but not fierce or violent, one may hope to overcome the hatred and envy of the whole universe.”<sup>1</sup>

D'Eon thanked the count for his friendly advice and good wishes, and took occasion to remind him of the undertaking that the stipulated pension should be paid with regularity ; then, making up a sealed packet of the papers in his possession, he entrusted them to the custody of his friend, Mr. Cotes,<sup>2</sup> who unceasingly urged him to become a British subject, and give up France, a country in which nobody was certain of sleeping in his own bed.

Testimonials such as that received from the King, and his continued employment in matters necessitating the greatest tact and circumspection, should suffice to acquit the Chevalier of having been a half-witted adventurer, as we find asserted by some writers. However impetuous, and of almost ungovernable passions, D'Eon was not a fool, nor, in the course of his history does it appear that any of his contemporaries seriously thought him one, if we except the exasperated de Guerchy, who thus sought to brand him, after having failed in his ‘blind authority,’ to ‘beat with a staff the child that might have led him.’

Whilst D'Eon was receiving from the King of France the highest marks of his royal confidence and favour, ministers at Versailles were officially, but clandestinely, seeking to secure his person ; and so late as November 1765, de Praslin, in conversation with the

<sup>1</sup> *Archives des affaires étrangères*. Gaill. 182. De Broglie, ii. 204.

<sup>2</sup> These papers were afterwards lodged with Earl Ferrers.

Duke of Richmond, the British ambassador, remonstrated upon England not surrendering the Chevalier to whom the Christian King had a hundred times a greater right, than had England to John Rice, 'a thief of the Publics,'<sup>1</sup> who was given up by France. Ever watchful, D'Eon was perfectly conscious of all that was passing.

'These poor ministers have read somewhere, and have heard it said, that Cardinal Richelieu had caused several members of his ministry to be assassinated and poisoned, and yet, notwithstanding, posterity considered him a great man. They have imagined they might do likewise, and also be taken for great men, but one cannot deceive one's self, there being nothing in common between them but the dagger and poison?'<sup>2</sup>

De Guerchy having quitted England 'on leave,' Durand succeeded him as minister plenipotentiary, by royal warrant dated June 8. One of the King's old correspondents on secret service, Durand was well known to D'Eon, with whom he had had frequent intercourse in former days. Recalled from Poland by the Duke de Choiseul, who suspected him of being upon intimate terms with the Count de Broglio, we now see him minister in England, specially charged, though secretly, by the King, as had been de la Rosière, Nardin, and Nort, to watch over and protect D'Eon. De Guerchy was virtually superseded.

Durand was not long in coming to terms with D'Eon, upon whom he prevailed to give up that most compromising of all papers, so far as the King was personally concerned—His Majesty's secret instructions of

<sup>1</sup> *France Correspondence*, Public Record Office. John Rice, a London broker, having absconded in December 1762, was arrested at Cambray, and being taken to England was tried for forgery, convicted, and executed at Tyburn the following May.

<sup>2</sup> Ch. MSS. 36.

June 3, 1763,<sup>1</sup> and for which the Chevalier received, in exchange, the royal warrant granting him an annual pension. Durand's written report was as follows:—

‘In compliance with the orders of the King, which I hold, M. D'Eon, late minister plenipotentiary from France at this court, has this day delivered into my own hands the private and secret order of the King, written and signed with his own hand, and dated June 3, 1763, addressed to the *Sieur D'Eon*. I further certify that the said order has been given to me in good condition, folded in a parchment cover addressed to his Majesty, and that it was shown to me enclosed and cemented within a brick adapted for the purpose, removed from the walls of the cellar and afterwards replaced.’

<sup>1</sup> See p. 77.

## CHAPTER XI.

D'Eon continues in the royal confidence—Secret correspondence again in peril—D'Eon's mother persecuted—De Guerchy's death—D'Eon's last letter to him—De Vergy's dying deposition—His will—D'Eon as secret correspondent—His public protest—The Musgrave scandal.

ONCE again was D'Eon admitted into the royal confidence—he had never lost the royal favour—without any knowledge thereof on the part of the King's ministers, and this by means of the very representative they had themselves nominated to the Court of Great Britain! A few weeks elapsed, and there occurred an incident which seemed pregnant of import to the Duke de Praslin, who put his whole heart into any action that had for its object the pursuit of those rash enough to resist his authority. The event proved to be of passing moment only, but merits notice as receiving importance from the Chevalier's subsequent history.

It was brought to the knowledge of the duke by a French woman named Dufour who kept furnished apartments in London, that the Chevalier D'Eon had been concealed for some days in her house, disguised as a female; that he had been in the habit of corresponding with the Count and the Marshal de Broglio, and receiving money from them. Upon being informed by Tercier, in behalf of the King, of these fresh indications of a possible exposure of their secret transactions, the Count de Broglio flew into a violent passion, and was well-nigh making a clean breast of the matter and

admitting his share in them, regardless of all consequences. He wrote to Tercier on October 22 :—

‘It must be confessed that in executing the orders which it is the King’s pleasure to convey to us, we encounter the most unforeseen and embarrassing difficulties, but the secret we are keeping is his Majesty’s, and nothing is easier than to make it known, should he desire to do so. One word from him will put an end to the inquisitiveness of his ministers, inquisitiveness of which he not only knows the particulars, but also the motives. Well! supposing M. de Choiseul were to know to-morrow that we are in correspondence with D’Eon! Supposing he were to know that I have elaborated, by order of the King, a plan for the invasion of England, what else could happen but that his Majesty would forbid all reference to the subject? They would no doubt be jealous and uneasy at the confidence with which he would appear to honour us, but I see no harm in this.’

De Sartines had been directed by de Praslin to inquire into the statements made by Dufour, saying, ‘Nothing essential is to be omitted this time!’ The officer of police insisted that the woman was of very doubtful reputation; no evidence, therefore, she was able to adduce could be accepted, and before involving persons of so high consideration, as were the de Broglies, in an affair of this kind, it would be necessary to obtain a written order from the King that he himself, at least, might be protected against all responsibility. Such pleas were worthy of a poor perplexed detective, for since the Hugonnet business, de Sartines felt himself bound, whatever his proper sense of duty, to consult, in the first place, the sovereign’s private interests and obey his secret commands, and he discerned, plainly enough, that the present was an instance which called for the exercise of his utmost discretion and prudence. Too well persuaded, on his part, of the futility of applying to the King for the order suggested

by the officer of police, de Praslin had to content himself with a simple re-examination of Dufour, from whom nothing more was to be learnt, and the summoning of Hugonnet, who declared his incompetence to supply any kind of information, as the woman was entirely unknown to him, nor had he ever heard of her. At the close of the inquiry, de Praslin said: 'I am not being duped, because, as a fact, this affair causes me very little anxiety. It is not D'Eon who will ruin the State.'<sup>1</sup>

Although de Guerchy and D'Eon had become separated never again to meet on this earth; although their unprofitable bickerings had come to an end and the time for recriminations was over, to cast each other into oblivion was too impossible a task for either. Upon his return to France, de Guerchy entered on a course of persecution, selecting for his victim D'Eon's aged mother, who was suddenly deprived of the enjoyment of certain free tenures, while the taxes on her little estate at Tonnerre where she was living in quiet retirement, were inordinately increased. The poor lady was in fact hunted to misery and despair.

'De Guerchy died at Paris in September 1767 in great anguish of body and mind. May our merciful God spare his soul in heaven, as I spared his body on earth!'<sup>2</sup>

D'Eon had sent the count a final challenge in the form of a letter, dated August 5, 1767, which reached him a few weeks only before his death, when his

<sup>1</sup> De Broglie, ii. 199.

<sup>2</sup> Preamble to Will. Ch. MSS. Of de Guerchy's father D'Eon relates the following anecdote: At Madame de Sévigné's house in Paris one evening, the guests entertained each other by telling their dreams of the preceding night. 'I dreamt,' said the old count, who was a very wealthy man, 'that I was the Golden Calf.' 'J'en suis persuadé,' observed the hostess, 'il n'y a que la dorure de trop.'

youthful son swore that he would some day avenge his father. This letter, in which all the events of the past were recapitulated, covered copies of the indictment, of the writ of *certiorari*, and of other documents connected with his trial in London, and called upon de Guerchy to justify himself.

‘Three weeks or one month from the date hereof should suffice to enable you to determine upon the line of conduct it is your intention to pursue. There are but two courses—justice, or an appeal to arms. Failing a reply at the expiration of the time stated, I will be persuaded of the hardness of your heart, and conclude that the world is to judge between us.’

No answer came, and D'Eon sent his letter to Amsterdam to be printed in the form of a pamphlet by his friend Wan, the publisher. Whilst it was in the press, Wan heard of de Guerchy's death, and wrote (September 23) to ask the Chevalier whether the publication was still to be proceeded with. The reply was in the affirmative, because he owed a full and complete justification to the King his master, to his country, to himself, to his family, to his protectors, and to the position he had held in England.

‘The ashes of a dead man should not be disturbed, and I am aware that to recall him to memory for the sake of retracing his ignominy is the measure of barbarism; but if the evil he wrought has influenced to such an extent the misfortunes of one who has survived him, as to make it appear that his parched bones perpetuate them even out of the depths of the tomb, personal interest, which is the first law of nature, requires, however reluctantly, that the corpse should be summoned to appear before the tribunal of mankind, not for the purpose of being defamed, but that the survivor may justify himself against the reproach cast upon him. Did not the Egyptians, so reverential towards their dead, summon, judge, and condemn the manes even of their monarchs? Let the inevitable therefore



be answerable for whatever is done against M. de Guerchy, though he be dead. Even in his grave he is guilty of the ills that are being endured. Had he made any reparation his death would have been respectfully considered, although his acts would have been abhorred.' <sup>1</sup>

*Hatred usually ends with the death of the one hated*, says Boccaccio; it was not so, however, with D'Eon, who to the close of his days never forgot, though he had long forgiven, the enemy that had been the cause of all his troubles.

Treyssac de Vergy died at Blackheath in October 1774.<sup>2</sup> Two magistrates, at the request of Sir John Fielding, attended to receive his dying statements, when, after confirming the depositions he had made upon oath, he said that being benevolently forgiven by the Chevalier D'Eon, who was present, for all the injury he had done to him, he met death with great pleasure. In his will, dated July 21 of the same year, and proved at Doctors' Commons on October 10, we find him strictly adhering to the substance of the evidence he had given ten years previously.

' . . . I declare that all which I have wrote and had printed at London in 1763 against the Chevalier D'Eon, then Minister Plenipotentiary of France to this court, I said it, wrote it, and had it printed only in consequence of the orders

<sup>1</sup> *Dernière lettre du Chevalier D'Eon à M. le Comte de Guerchy, en date du 5 Août, 1767, avec l'extrait de la Procédure en bonne forme* [qui a été imprimé en un vol. in 4to en 1765, le Comte de Guerchy étant alors Ambassadeur de France à Londres]. *Le sacrifice de ma vie a été et sera pour mon roi et ma patrie; celui de mon honneur ne sera pour personne. A Londres, 1767.* The words in brackets are in D'Eon's hand, on the copy consulted by the author.

<sup>2</sup> De Vergy's body, enclosed in a leaden coffin, was kept at the undertaker's in Church Street, St. Ann, and not interred at St. Pancras until the following March! He desired that his remains should be removed to the family vault at Bordeaux, but his widow, although in easy circumstances, persisted in refusing to supply the necessary funds.

and money that were given to me by the Count de Guerchy, and in consequence of the plot formed at Paris in July 1763 between the Count de Guerchy and the Count d'Argental, and into which plot the said Count d'Argental drew me at Paris, and the above-said Count de Guerchy on his arrival at London. I declare and protest that I persist, and always will persist, in the truth of two depositions upon oath which I made and swore to, November 12, 1764, before Mr. Justice Wilmot, judge of the Court of King's Bench of England, and November 27, 1764, before Mr. Justice Yates, also judge of the Court of King's Bench of England, in which I have given a true and circumstantial account of the said plot. In consequence of which I earnestly beg the Chevalier D'Eon to forget, and to pardon me all the wrong which I have done to him, to his fortune, to himself, and to all his family, by being concerned in designs which were so hurtful to him—designs whose blackness I was ignorant of till the moment when the Count de Guerchy thought that the destruction of the Chevalier D'Eon ought not to be retarded any longer. The knowledge of this struck me with horror, restored me to myself, and made me undertake my defence and that of the Chevalier D'Eon. . . .'

The Chevalier was firmly established as secret correspondent in London, performing his duty loyally and competently, even though frequently suffering from absolute want in consequence of his pension never being paid with regularity, and always in arrears; and had it not been for the hospitality of some of his English friends, foremost amongst whom was the Marquis of Tavistock,<sup>1</sup> he would have had to endure many a sad privation. The Duke de Broglie admits that D'Eon accomplished his task as correspondent and newsmonger with considerable ability, and that he was the precursor, if not actually the first of political reporters, and the most trustworthy and wittiest, if not

<sup>1</sup> By the untimely death of this nobleman in the hunting-field, in March 1767, the Chevalier lost a kind and sympathetic supporter. He was the author of the epitaph inscribed on the Marquis' tomb at Chenies.

the most useful, of correspondents. The contents of his letters, of which we give an example, verified as they may be by the history of the times, testify clearly enough to his qualities as a shrewd and correct observer, to the facility with which he obtained information and the unlimited sphere of his operations, and are probably unique, regard being had to the times in which he lived, in their resemblance to the efficient productions of our own modern newspaper reporters.

*The Chevalier D'Eon to the Count de Broglio.*

‘London, March 15, 1766.

‘Sir,—You are perhaps astonished at my not having acknowledged the receipt of your letter of the 4th inst. Let me give you my reasons; I hope you will find them legitimate, and that you will consider my silence to be the effect of my prudence.

‘The notorious question of *General Warrants* for the arrest of persons and seizure of their papers, has at last been determined, and it is decided that in scarcely any instance may a person and his papers be seized, except for high treason against the king and country. But it has also been decided that unauthorised persons, convicted of corresponding in cypher with foreign countries, are liable to arrest and to have their papers seized, and to be judged according to the nature of their correspondence. This decision, which I cannot but admit as being very just and very reasonable, has checked my zeal, and has even caused me some alarm, and especially since the rupture between Messieurs Pitt and Temple. The one may, ere long, be called to the ministry, suspect me, and cause me to be arrested for the sake of vexing the other; add to this, that as Messieurs Pitt and Temple do not at any time spare the ministers in office, I am equally liable to being suspected and inconvenienced by the latter. You must be aware of the evil results were I arrested with all the old secret correspondence! . . . Under these circumstances I deemed it wiser to keep still and thus remove the slightest cause for suspicion. . . . What will most astonish

is this, that the ministers actually in office, in their anxiety for popularity, have acted against the opinion, the wishes, and the orders of the King, in causing the repeal, by the House of Commons, of the Acts of Parliament whereby fresh taxes have been imposed in America, the people having rebelled to a degree without parallel in history; and they have had the assurance to make use of their resources and favour at Court for the purpose of securing votes! In this remarkable business they have made so sorrowful a personage as his Britannic Majesty play a part similar to that assigned in Virgil's *Æneid* to King Latinus. Truly, they treat the King as if he were a silly child, incapable of discerning what is of advantage to the State, and they do not in the least conceal their views in the matter. . . . The King is incensed against his mother (the Princess of Wales), and his favourite (Lord Bute); but they do not know how to form a new ministry that will be well considered and durable. The King will have nothing to do with Mr. Pitt just now, and is even very angry with him in consequence of what he has dared to say and substantiate in the House of Commons—that the Americans were not rebels, seeing that the King, or the late ministry and parliament, had broken faith with them; that it was common justice to repeal the Acts of Parliament, which he could not consider otherwise than as acts of fraud on the Americans. At first every member in the House felt indignant at these sentiments, and it was thought that his popularity was gone; being henceforth no longer feared, he will no longer be necessary. He was supported by four or five members only, and his opponents expressed the opinion, in a full House, that Mr. Pitt deserved to be sent to the Tower. He retired to the country for eight days, and then returned to declaim before the House more emphatically than ever, supporting his opinions by all manner of arguments founded on natural, civil, and political laws, even quoting the Holy Scriptures frequently, that he might the more ably imitate the great seer, Cromwell. He also pretended to be suffering from gout, that he might enjoy the privilege of assisting at the deliberations at his ease, holding forth, at one moment seated, at another standing, wrapped up in a blanket; he would then fall into a swoon, or sink into deep meditations. During this time, his

friends and a large number of city merchants having property in America or interested in its trade, won over a crowd of partisans from amongst the people, and proceeded to the House to sing aloud the praises of Mr. Pitt. This political and periodical gout, and all this *charlatanerie*, which does not fail to excite the people, had so great an effect on the House of Commons that nearly all the members have sided with Mr. Pitt, and the repeal of the Act has already passed the House. Thus has the fault strenuously charged against the distinguished patriot served to crown him with glory, at least in the eyes of the people.

‘A few days ago the King and Queen dined with the Princess of Wales, who is unwell. The after-dinner conversation between the august personages became so animated, that the servants in the ante-room overheard the discussions which were being conducted with warmth far from royal. Although the King enjoys an income of 120,000*l.* sterling, I know from Temple, who has learnt it from his brother, lately paymaster at the Treasury, who has verified the fact, that his personal debts, contracted since he ascended the throne, amount to upwards of half a million sterling, and this in consequence of having followed the advice of Lord Bute, and distributed sums of money for the sake of securing votes in Parliament and establishing royal authority, all of which has turned out very amiss. These debts, the wish to bribe, as well as the economical education given him by the Princess of Wales, oblige him to live in London and at Richmond with a niggardliness unworthy of royalty. He never has any kind of supplies, but sends for six bottles of wine at a time, and for one bottle of rum with which to brew punch, so that he is the laughing-stock of all the city dealers, who are great feeders, heavy drinkers, and whose jokes are as light as their roast-beef. Numerous pamphlets and prints have been published on the subject, and the matter has been turned into jest on the stage. In his almost daily drives between London and Richmond, the King takes for his body-guard a detachment of five-and-twenty light horse of the *élite* or of the *bourgeois*; it is only a few days since a whole detachment of these supposed guards was placed under arrest for playing at highway robbery, pistol in hand.

. 'Just fancy into what hands the King and the royal family have fallen! It is whispered by profound politicians or great enemies to Lord Bute, that the latter, who is allied to the house of Stuart, is, from the bottom of his heart, deeply attached to the Pretender; that he very ably serves this old master whilst shaping the conduct of the King of England as he does, which may in the end result in the Crown being lost to the House of Hanover. God alone is able to search the heart of this Scotchman. I consider Lord Bute to be as clever as he is shrewd; I certainly consider him even more shrewd than he is clever; but, notwithstanding his skill at intrigue, which I admit, I do not think he has a very bad heart—were it so, we should be forced to acknowledge that there never existed a more cunning rascal. It must, however, be admitted that we find, especially in the history of Scotland, traits of character still more odious. Ambition or religion is capable of the greatest crimes, even more than of the greatest virtues. You may make what reflections you please on the above, but I think it my duty to communicate to you the opening before me, upon a subject of such importance.

'I am, &c.'

'P.S.—A few evenings ago the Duke of York, not very particular in his love affairs, was surprised with a lady by her husband, a captain, who wounded him slightly on the shoulder with a stroke of his sword, so that he has had to keep his room for some days; but this affair was hushed up immediately. His brother, the Duke of Gloucester, has fallen violently in love with the young dowager Lady Waldegrave, and as it is feared he might contract a secret marriage, it is arranged that he is to travel abroad with the Duke of Brunswick, who will return to England to conduct his consort to Germany. So far as this duke is concerned, he does not live on good terms with the Princess Augusta, his wife, who, however, is jealous of her husband. Persons in the palace have assured my friend that the prince's love for his wife has cooled because he has discovered that she has an issue on the leg, and that their two children are already attacked with the King's evil, that is to say, scrofula, of which the King's younger brother has lately died.'

De Broglio lost no time in replying. He desired

D'Eon to seek to discover, by diligent research, in which he was to observe the greatest circumspection, what prospect there would be of success were the restoration of the Stuarts to be attempted; and he further wished to know whether it would be dangerous to sound Lord Bute as to his secret intentions, or whether it would be better to watch and wait. The Chevalier recommended the latter course, saying that according to his judgment men and things were not sufficiently matured.<sup>1</sup>

The number of D'Eon's friends in every class of London society, clearly exceeded that of his enemies who were seeking to discredit him in public opinion, by resorting to the daily papers as a vehicle for their malice. We may mention as an example, that in October of this year there appeared in the 'St. James' Chronicle'<sup>2</sup> the announcement of a work preparing for the press, and in due time to be published and *dedicated to Parliament*, which would contain amongst other matter: 'An Account of the Chevalier D'Eon's overtures to impeach three persons, by name, of SELLING THE PEACE TO FRANCE—an Account of the Bill of Indictment found against a great foreigner for a conspiracy to assassinate the Chevalier D'Eon—an Account of the *nolle prosequi* granted to stop proceedings against the said foreigner—an Account of the attempt made to seize the person and papers of the Chevalier D'Eon, on November 20, 1764, by a warrant from the then ministry—an Account of the pension granted to Count Viri for *his services* in making the Peace—Extract of a letter from the Duke of N——s to the Duke de Praslin, dated London, February 20, 1763.'

<sup>1</sup> *Archives des affaires étrangères.* Gaill. 388.

<sup>2</sup> October 7-9, 1763.

D'Eon's indignant notification and protest at the liberty taken with his name, and disowning all participation in the forthcoming pamphlet, was prompt and conclusive, and inserted in the same paper in French with an English translation.

*To the Author of the 'St. James' Chronicle.'*

'Sir,—I have seen with much surprise, in your paper of the 7th inst., an advertisement of a work said to be preparing for the press, dedicated to your Parliament, containing, amongst other extraordinary pieces, *An account of the Chevalier D'Eon's overtures to impeach three persons, by name, of selling the Peace to the French*, and other papers of that nature. If I had been the author, I should not have had the impertinence to have dedicated them to your Parliament, nor to have inserted names so respectable as those in your said advertisement. I declare to you, sir, as well as to your public, upon my honour, that I have no concern, directly or indirectly, in the impression of any such work, nor in any other which may be published in my name, or in any way insinuating that I have had, or will have any concern therein. And to authenticate as much as possible, this my declaration, I beg you will immediately print the above in your paper.<sup>1</sup>

'I am, Sir,

'Your humble servant,

'The CHEVALIER D'EON.'

'York, October 18, 1766.'

The author of the notice publicly disavowed by D'Eon was believed by some to be a Dr. Musgrave,<sup>2</sup> who, availing himself three years later of a general election, issued an *Address to the Gentlemen, Clergy, and Freeholders of the County of Devon*, under date, Plymouth, August 12, 1769, which he caused to be

<sup>1</sup> Paper of October 23–25, 1766.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Musgrave had practised in Paris, and was known for the publication of some tragedies of Euripides. 'A weak and credulous man.' He died in 1780.



extensively circulated about the kingdom. In this document, intended in reality for the people of England, Dr. Musgrave represented that whilst residing in Paris, in 1764, he discovered that the Peace signed the previous year had been sold to the French by some persons of high rank. He had at different times been informed by Sir George Younge, Mr. Fitzherbert, and other members of Parliament, that overtures were made to them during the summer of 1764, in the name of the Chevalier D'Eon, imputing that he, the Chevalier, was ready to impeach three persons, two of whom were peers and members of the Privy Council, for selling the Peace to the French, Sir George Younge having in particular told him that he understood the charge could be supported by written as well as by living evidence. By direction of Dr. Blackstone<sup>1</sup> he waited, May 10, 1765, on Lord Halifax, Secretary of State, and delivered to him an exact narrative of the intelligence he had received at Paris, with copies of four letters to and from Lord Hertford; seven days after which interview, he was informed by Mr. Fitzherbert that overtures were then being made to the Chevalier D'Eon to get his papers from him for a stipulated sum of money. When pressed by Dr. Musgrave, at a second interview, to inquire into the truth of the charge, Lord Halifax objected to all public steps that might cause alarm, and asked him to point out a way of prosecuting the inquiry in secret, and whether, in so doing, there was any probability of obtaining positive proof of the alleged facts. The Doctor urged Lord Halifax to send for the Chevalier D'Eon and examine him upon the subject, to peruse his papers, and then proceed according to proofs, it being well known that the Chevalier had the negotia-

<sup>1</sup> Solicitor to her Majesty the Queen, and later, Lord Chief Justice.

tions on the part of the French, also the despatches of the Duke de Nivernois. This his lordship refused to do; the Doctor therefore took it upon himself to accuse the Secretary of State of wilful obstruction of national justice in delaying inquiry, such obstruction not only giving a temporary impunity to offenders, but tending also to make the impunity perpetual, seeing that living witnesses were exposed to the chances of mortality, and written evidence to the not uncommon casualty of fire. The Doctor went on to say that the papers upon which the whole of the written evidence depended were anything but secure—they were not in safety. Did it not stand upon record that the Count de Guerchy had conspired to assassinate the Chevalier D'Eon, a charge that had not been either refuted or answered; which, not succeeding, a band of ruffians was hired to kidnap that gentleman and carry off his papers! Lord Halifax's refusals did not deter him from carrying his own papers to the Speaker to be laid before the late House of Commons. The Speaker was pleased to justify his conduct by allowing that the affair ought to be inquired into, although refusing to be instrumental in promoting the inquiry. Dr. Musgrave concluded his address by submitting the prosecution of the affair to the judgment of those for whom his message was intended, in full confidence that the result of their deliberations would do honour at the same time to their prudence, candour, and patriotism.<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Musgrave's paper was intended to persuade the people of England that what many already believed was true—that the French Court had paid immense sums of money to the Princess of Wales, Lord Bute, the Duke of Richmond, Lords Egremont and Halifax,

<sup>1</sup> *Gentleman's Magazine*, vol. xxxix.

and Count Viri, towards bringing about a general peace, a remonstrancé which set the whole nation in a flame. The Court of St. James, the Peace of 1763 and all who had a hand in it, became the objects of universal hatred, and in 1770 Parliament was obliged to take serious notice of the movement.<sup>1</sup> D'Eon, regardless of expense, was not content to oppose Musgrave's popular scandal and that of a throng of writers, who, without any proof whatever, attempted to support such rash and dishonourable reports, but he also, by his depositions, in a great measure contributed to the discrediting of the Doctor's virulence, and the latter was reprimanded by the Speaker of the House of Commons as the disturber of public tranquillity, D'Eon on his part gaining the approbation of the two courts and of the people in general.<sup>2</sup>

*D'Eon's letter to Dr. Musgrave.*

'Sir,—You will permit me to believe that you never knew any more of me than I have the honour of knowing of you, and if in your letter of August 12 you had not made a wrong use of my name, I should not now find myself obliged to enter into a correspondence with you. You pretend that in the summer of 1764, overtures were made in my name to several members of Parliament, importing that I was ready to impeach three persons, two of whom were Peers and members of the Privy Council, of having sold the Peace to the French, and you seem to found thereupon the evidence of a charge which you say you carried yourself to Lord Halifax. I declare, therefore, here, that I never made or caused to be made, any such overture, either in the winter or the summer of 1764, nor at any other time. I am on one side too faithful to the office I filled, and on the other too zealous a friend to truth. . . . I assure you I do not know

<sup>1</sup> The charges were declared in Parliament to be 'frivolous'; yet Lord Camden was not to be persuaded, even when years had passed, that there had been no foundation whatever for them.

<sup>2</sup> *European Magazine*, 1791.

either Sir George Younge or Mr. Fitzherbert, and never authorised any person whatever to make in my name such overtures, which the abhorrence alone I have for calumny would make me detest. I call upon you, therefore, to lay before the public the name of the audacious person who has made use of mine to discover his own odious offers. The gentlemen whom you have given as your witnesses cannot deny you this justification of their own veracity and yours. . . . It appears to me an act of the last imprudence, in an affair of so much weight, to build upon report for naming publicly a person of my character, without having previously consulted him. If you had recollected the contradictions I gave in 'St. James' Chronicle' of October 25, 1760, No. 881, to an advertisement in the same paper, No. 875, you had saved me the trouble of replying to you at this time. What must be the result? The public will have read greedily your letter; will have believed its contents because you appeal therein to my testimony. But what will they think now, when your own interest, my honour and truth oblige me to deny all that you have advanced therein with respect to me. It is the same with your pretence that about May 17, 1765, Mr. Fitzherbert told you he knew that overtures had been made to me, to sell for a sum of money the papers that were in my hands. . . . I here certify to you, on my word of honour, and in the face of the public, that I cannot be of any sort of use to you, that I never entered into any treaty for the sale of papers, and never either by myself, or any agent authorised on my part, offered to make appear that the Peace had been sold to France. If Lord Halifax or the Speaker had caused me to be cited, he might have known by my answers what my thoughts were, that England rather gave money to France than France to England, to conclude the last Peace, and that the happiness I had in concurring to the great work of peace, has inspired me with sentiments of the justest veneration for the English commissioners who had been employed in it, and with the most lively esteem and sincerest admiration for the late Count Viri, who, in his attachment to the welfare of the two nations then at war, and thanks to his indefatigable zeal, had the glory of bringing that peace to a happy conclusion. . . . In order to enable you to be as prudent as patriotic, I sign this letter and therein give

you my address, that for the maintenance of your own veracity you may furnish me with the means of convicting publicly those slanderers who have dared to make use of my name, in a manner still more repugnant to real facts than the dignity with which I have ever supported my character.<sup>1</sup>

‘I have, &c.,

‘The CHEVALIER D'EON.’

‘In Petty France, Westminster.’

<sup>1</sup> *Gentleman's Magazine*, vol. xxxix.

## CHAPTER XII.

D'Eon and Wilkes—Fickle Louis XV.—Literary labours—Doubts raised as to D'Eon's sex—Princess Dashkoff—Heavy gambling transactions on D'Eon's sex—Insult resented—Irritation at being thought a female—Indignant denial of being concerned in the bets made—State of penury—Offers of relief from Poniatovsky, now King of Poland—Saves England from war—Officially reported to be a female—Personal appearance—Death of Louis XV.—D'Eon's estimate of the late king—Count de Broglio's report on D'Eon to Louis XVI.—System of secret correspondence abolished—D'Eon to continue his reports in cypher.

THE expulsion of John Wilkes from the House of Commons and his trial for libel, and D'Eon's conviction on a similar charge, both of which took place in 1764, were almost contemporary events, and although the Chevalier abstained from taking any part in the riots of that year, he never failed, when opportunity offered, to show his sympathy for *Wilkes and Liberty!* After the great agitator had returned to England in 1768, and was undergoing his sentence of twenty-two months' imprisonment in King's Bench for seditious libel and blasphemy, D'Eon one day sent him a present of twelve smoked tongues, with a note in which he expressed the wish that 'the tongues might have the eloquence of Cicero and the nicety of speech of Voltaire,' to laud him worthily upon the anniversary of his birth, which, in the future, would ever be regarded as that of English liberty.'<sup>1</sup>

A singular letter from Louis XV. to the Count de Broglio, dated February 12, 1767, commences thus:—

<sup>1</sup> B.M. MSS.

‘You know that D'Eon is a madman, and perhaps a dangerous one, but there is nothing better to be done with madmen than to lock them up, and certainly in England he is recognised as such, and cannot be of any use to the English except to afford them amusement, and enable them to make fun of M. de Guerchy. I do not know what instructions M. de Fuentes has had, or expects to receive, in regard to him.’<sup>1</sup> For all that, all I have promised him must be performed, but nothing more. I have a deadly hatred to madmen. . . .’

Yet the man who was considered insane only when it suited the King to say so, was retained as secret agent enjoying the royal confidence, and upon the Baron de Breteuil, nominated ambassador to Holland, being sent to England in 1768 on a special mission, he was ordered ‘to see and confer with D'Eon,’ which, however, he was to do ‘in the most secret manner possible.’<sup>2</sup>

For the next few years D'Eon beguiled his leisure in literary labours, spending his summers chiefly at Staunton Harold, Earl Ferrers' seat in Leicestershire. He retired late and rose early, worked fifteen hours a day, partook of one meal only, at two p.m., and refused to receive any visitors except on Sundays. His ordinary residence from July 1769, when he quitted 32 Brewer Street, and 1772, when he returned to those his old quarters, was Petty France, Westminster, the house he occupied having a garden bordering on the park, and to which he removed to be near his friend, Mr. Cotes. He produced ‘*Les Loisirs du Chevalier D'Eon, &c.*,’ in thirteen volumes,<sup>3</sup> which he dedicated to his

<sup>1</sup> An incident in Spanish affairs further explained by D'Eon in his letter to the Count de Broglio of July 7, 1774, which see.

<sup>2</sup> Louis XV. to the Count de Broglio, May 5, 1768. Boutaric, i. 354, 381.

<sup>3</sup> *Les Loisirs du Chevalier D'Eon de Beaumont, ancien Ministre Plénipotentiaire de France, sur divers sujets importants d'Administration, &c.*, 13 vols. 8vo., Amsterdam, 1774.

friend and protector, the now disgraced and exiled Duke de Choiseul.

‘ . . . It is, my lord, in the land of philosophy and liberty, where one learns not to bestow praise except on virtue and merit, that my mind, freed from prejudice, publicly exposes the traits that characterise you.’

Commenting on this dedication, a newspaper article thus eulogises D'Eon :—

‘There is as great a singularity in the character of the Chevalier D'Eon, as *in our ignorance of his sex*. The rule of his life is peculiar to himself; no other man or woman would, in the same position, write and behave as he does. Is it reason, virtue, or caprice that dictates his conduct, and makes him in his manners the reverse of our men of fashion? Let our readers judge from the following fact. Our courtiers adore the man upon whom fortune smiles, and rail at him as soon as he is no longer in favour; the Chevalier follows an unjustly disgraced minister in his exile, and there pays him the tribute of praise he refused him in the time of his prosperity. When the French Court conceal their esteem for the Duke de Choiseul, and bend the knee to the favourite they despise, to that duke the Chevalier dedicates his “Loisirs”—him he openly dares to commend! That oddity will not make a fortune at St. James’; it cannot be applauded when folly holds the place of merit, and immorality rides triumphant over the ruins of religion!’<sup>1</sup>

The work was well received, and especially, it was said, at Berlin, where the notices it contained on political administration, and particularly that branch relating to finance, caused so favourable an impression on the ministers, for they found therein a quantity of new and extremely useful ideas, that his Prussian Majesty ordered they should immediately be put into

<sup>1</sup> *The Public Advertiser*, March 21, 1774.





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THE CHEVALIER D'EON.

1770.

*See Appendix.*



operation for the benefit of the public and of the Government.<sup>1</sup>

The Chevalier's popularity, chiefly amongst those who interested themselves in the politics of the day, had never waned since his first introduction into English society, much of the favour he enjoyed being due to his genial and agreeable manners, his openness of character, and the dignity and spirit of independence with which he bore his trials; but in the year we have reached—1769—his name, somewhat more freely canvassed, began to attain unenviable notoriety, for doubts were being seriously entertained as to the nature of his sex, and what was at first whispered from mouth to ear became openly revealed, until public opinion had fairly fastened on the idea that the Chevalier D'Eon was not a man at all but a woman! And when the Princess Dashkoff, who chanced to arrive in England at this juncture, related that D'Eon, whom she perfectly well knew at St. Petersburg, had been received and entertained by the Empress Elizabeth with all the intimacy to which his believed in sex admitted him, further doubts existed in the minds of a few only; and what had been suspected was boldly advanced as a certainty, the Count de Châtelet, French ambassador in London, among the number, writing to tell Louis XV. he was persuaded that the Chevalier was a *filles*. According to a biographical memoir in the 'Gentleman's Magazine,' vol. liii., the first indications that led to a suspicion of D'Eon's sex was a wound received in a duel.

John Taylor, the author of 'Monsieur Tonson,' who had met the Chevalier in advanced life, was assured by a very old friend of his father, one well acquainted with D'Eon at this period, that his manners were captivating

<sup>1</sup> *London Evening Post*, July 21–23, 1774.

and that he might have married most advantageously, as several ladies of good family and with large fortunes had made overtures to him at their country seats where he visited; but that upon all such occasions he immediately left the house, whence it was inferred he quitted the place on account of his being really of the female sex.<sup>1</sup>

It was the fashion in England for all matters of dispute to become the subject of betting, and gambling transactions attained extraordinary proportions, the lead being taken at Brooks's, White's, and other clubs, as Walpole relates in some curious anecdotes. The uncertainty of the sex of a noted character was too fair an opportunity to be wasted, and gambling policies of insurance were effected to large amounts, as shown in the opposite statement, giving an idea of the extent to which such transactions were carried within the first few months of their being started, reaching, as they subsequently did, considerably larger proportions.

To add to the chagrin endured at the gross liberties taken with his name, the Chevalier was reproached by his enemies with being an accomplice in the scandalous jobbing affairs and a sharer in the plunder, charges he indignantly repudiated when unburdening himself to his old friend the count.<sup>2</sup>

' . . . I am grieved to hear, and even to read in the English papers, all the extraordinary reports that reach from Paris, London, and even St. Petersburg, on the uncertainty of my sex, and which gain ground in a country of enthusiasts such as this, and to such an extent, that policies of insurance for considerable sums are being publicly effected upon so indecent a subject, both at Court and in the city. I held my peace for a long time.

<sup>1</sup> *Records of my Life*, i. 338. London, 1832.

<sup>2</sup> The Count de Broglie had been at the head of the Secret Correspondence Department since the death of Tercier in January 1767.

# *Insurance on the Sex of Monsieur the Chevalier D'Eon.<sup>1</sup>*

Dr.

Cr.

		£	s.	d.		£	s.	d.
1770.					1770.			
March 28.	To premium on 600 <i>l.</i> at 15 <i>gs.</i>				June 19.	By 300 <i>l.</i> compromised at 50 per cent.	150	0 0
	per cent.			94 <i>l.</i> 10 <i>s.</i>	"	" 2,300 <i>l.</i> sold at 40 per cent.	920	0 0
	Policy . . . . .			10 <i>s.</i> 6 <i>d.</i>	"	" 300 <i>l.</i> sold at 20 per cent.	60	0 0
March 30.	To premium on 200 <i>l.</i> at 15 <i>gs.</i>			95 0 6	"	" 500 <i>l.</i> sold at 20 per cent.	100	0 0
	per cent.					8,400 <i>l.</i>	1,230	0 0
	Do. 300 <i>l.</i> do.			31 10 0		Brokerage at 5 per cent.	60	10 0
	Do. 200 <i>l.</i> do.			47 5 0				
	Do. 100 <i>l.</i> do.			31 10 0				
April 10.	Do. 500 <i>l.</i> do. 78 <i>l.</i> 15 <i>s.</i>			15 15 0				
	Policy . . . . .			10 <i>s.</i> 6 <i>d.</i>				
April 30.	To premium on 500 <i>l.</i> at 20 <i>gs.</i>			79 5 6				
	per cent. and Policy .			105 10 6				
	Do. 1,000 <i>l.</i> at 10 <i>gs.</i> per cent.			105 0 0				
	8,400 <i>l.</i>			510 16 6				
	To profit . . . . .			658 13 6				
				1,169 10 0				
						Whereof par $\frac{1}{4}$ of the profit is 164 <i>l.</i> 13 <i>s.</i> 4 <i>d.</i>	1,169	10 0

<sup>1</sup> B.M. MSS.

My silence only served to increase suspicion and the number of insurances. I consequently repaired, last Saturday, to the Exchange and to the several neighbouring coffee-houses, where all kinds of insurances and stock-jobbing take place, and there, in uniform, walking-stick in hand, I obliged the money-broker Bird, who was the first to start one of these impudent insurances, to beg my pardon. Yielding the choice of weapons, I challenged to fight anybody who might consider himself the most incredulous, the bravest, or the most insolent of the entire assembly, and several thousands were present. All treated me with great courtesy, and in their amazement not one of those male adversaries, in this great city, dared either to cross sticks or to fight me, even though I remained in their midst from noon until two o'clock, to afford them ample time to decide amongst themselves. I took my leave, making my address generally known in the event of any one changing his mind. This is the way in which such people should be taken in hand and silenced. They are most insolent in the liberties they take, even with the greatest persons at Court, and the more reason with me, a private individual whom they know to be exiled from France, and lonely. Bird assured me, in the face of his apologies, that he and his colleagues were able to effect the most extraordinary insurances or wagers, even in regard to the royal family, except, in observance of an Act of Parliament, so far as concerned the life of the King, the Queen, and their children, and that he was employed by a great lady, whose name he refused to communicate, to effect an insurance on my sex. . . .'

' . . . I beg of you, sir, not to be displeased with your old aide-de-camp, if you read in the *Gazette*, or elsewhere, that on the 7th of this month I broke my cane across two Englishmen for taking impudent liberties with my name. My conduct has been approved by military men and others alive to a sense of honour. Since making my two visits to the city, nobody has dared, either at court or anywhere about town, to make a wager, publicly, on the nature of my sex, of which I have stamped virile proofs on the faces of two insolent fellows. . . .'

'Some of my discreet friends have recommended me to leave London for a month or two, and travel quietly in Ireland under an assumed name, for I am not known there. In spite of my



threats and the blows I have dealt, and of my conduct through life, an inconceivable mania for effecting insurances to a considerable amount on the uncertainty of my sex has again taken hold of people in the city, and I am cautioned, from several quarters, that some rich persons entertain the idea of having me carried off, by artifice, force, or stratagem, so that the point may be settled in defiance of me, a thing I will not tolerate, and which, should the attempt be made, will place me under the cruel necessity of killing somebody. . . . I can declare to you, sir, upon my honour, that I am not interested to the value of even one *sou* in these bets and insurances. . . . I am sufficiently mortified at being what nature has made me, and that the dispassion of my natural temperament should induce my friends to imagine, in their innocence, and this in France, in Russia, and in England, that I am of the female sex. The malice of my enemies has confirmed all this since the beginning of my misfortunes, which I have not by any means deserved, and of which I should have been rid long ago. I leave all to the King's and to your own kindness of heart. . . .'<sup>1</sup>

The tone of swagger repeated in the above letters, would dispose to the belief that D'Eon was exaggerating the degree of front he had shown to those Englishmen who were taking unwarrantable liberties with his name; but the measure of his veracity would appear to be out of the question. In the 'Public Advertiser' of November 16, 1774, it was stated that—

'the Chevalier D'Eon with justice complains of our public prints; they are eternally sending him to France, when he is body and soul fixed in this country; they have lately confined him to the Bastille, when he fled to England as a country of liberty, and they lately made a woman of him, when not one of his enemies dared to put his manhood to the proof. He makes no complaint of the English ladies.'

<sup>1</sup> March 25, April 16, May 7, 1771. These letters, all in cypher, were addressed to M. Koppfing, banker, Rue Quincampoix, Paris. *Archives des affaires étrangères*. Gaill. 190.

That the calumnies of which D'Eon continued to be the object were not chargeable to all classes of society, is to be inferred from a notice which appeared in the papers a few days later, announcing—

‘Earl Ferrers, Sir John Fielding, Messieurs Addington and Wright, and other worthy magistrates and gentlemen, and their ladies, did the Chevalier the honour to dine with him in Brewer Street, Golden Square, a convincing proof that he is not confined in the Bastille, as certain weak and wicked persons have popularly asserted, ignorant of the justice and honour his worth and merit have deserved.’

Being at dinner one day with his friend Angelo, D'Eon was informed of the presence, in the next room, of a Jew named Treves who would, on condition that he discovered his sex, on the instant pay him one thousand pounds; when, says Henry Angelo, he flew into such a violent passion, that it was with much difficulty his father could restrain him in his rage against the Israelite.

For the second time in his life the Chevalier found himself to be in imminent peril of being kidnapped in the interests of those who had heavy stakes on his sex, and were pressing for having the question resolved off-hand. Leaving London, he wandered restlessly in the north, until he saw in the papers that his disappearance was causing anxiety to his friends, who were offering a handsome reward and the payment of all reasonable expenses for any intelligence that should lead to his recovery, if concealed or restrained of his liberty. He was described as being dressed, upon leaving his home, in scarlet faced with green, and wearing the cross of Saint Louis; he had a new plain hat with silver button, loop and band, and his sword, but no cane. Inquired after and sought, and no trace of him being obtainable,

a *caveat* was entered at Doctors' Commons against his goods, on the supposition that he was dead. Hastening back he informed his friend, Mr. Fountain, of Litchfield Street, who had been most active in searching after him, of his arrival in London, in a note which appeared in the papers<sup>1</sup> the following morning with the announcement :—

'This night, about eleven o'clock, the Chevalier D'Eon, whose extraordinary disappearance above six weeks ago has been the subject of much conversation and inquiry, arrived in good health at his house in Petty France, Westminster.'

Then, in due course, he presented himself before Lord Mayor Crosby,<sup>2</sup> as the most public way of testifying that he was alive, and made an affidavit to the effect that—

'he never had, and never would have any part, directly or indirectly, in the policies of insurance made on his sex; that he had never touched and never would touch a single guinea from any person or persons, on account of the said insurances; that he never would enter into any negotiations with any person or persons, however considerable the sums that had been offered to him, and which had amounted to 25,000*l.*, to prove, judicially, his sex.'

In reporting his proceedings to de Broglio the Chevalier wrote :—

'I have only had time to travel over the North of England, and a part of Scotland. Two important reasons prevented me from going to Ireland as I had intended. 1. My funds were insufficient. 2. Because, whilst on my travels, I noticed in the English papers that the public, ever jealous of its liberties, was much alarmed, and that my own friends were greatly concerned at my supposed abduction, and that all the doors of the house I occupy had been sealed. I returned immediately to reassure the public and my friends, as well as to attend to my private

<sup>1</sup> Of June 20, 1771.

<sup>2</sup> On June 29, 1771.

affairs. With regard to the cypher and King's papers, I had, as you are aware, insured their safety before I went away, and they would not have been found, at least not unless the house was razed to the ground.

'By last Tuesday's post I sent to you the "Public Advertiser," which contains the declaration I made, under oath, before the Lord Mayor, that I am not interested to the value of one shilling, directly or indirectly, in the policies of insurance that have been effected on my person. It is not my fault if the rage for betting, on all matters, is a national disorder amongst Englishmen, who will frequently risk even more than the fortune they possess on a single horse-race. I do not care for all their policies of insurance, their articles, newspapers, prints, or themselves either, and they are aware of it. I have given proof, and will again do so to their hearts' content, that I am not only a man, but a captain of dragoons with sword in hand. It is not my fault if the Court of Russia, and notably, the Princess Dashkoff, has assured the English Court that I am a female. It is not my fault if the Duke de Praslin has caused secret, and almost public, inquiry to be pursued in France to confirm this fact, whilst his friend de Guerchy sneakingly spread the report at this Court that I am a hermaphrodite! Anyhow, it is not my fault if I exist such as nature formed me; perfectly or imperfectly formed, I have ever, heart and soul, faithfully served the King in politics as in war. I am in a condition to serve him better than ever, and shall be at all times ready to fly, at his bidding, whithersoever he may send me.'

D'Eon never allowed anything to interfere with his first object in life, that of supplying his royal master with the fullest information on every subject of interest; this, however, was not to be effected without resources of some kind; and as it was his misfortune ever to be left without funds, even to not receiving his pension with any degree of regularity, he became fast involved in serious difficulties, which obliged him to live in a state of misery that became a terrible burden for one of his past life

<sup>1</sup> London, July 5, 1771. *Archives des affaires étrangères*. Gaill. 194.

and habits to bear. He might have been the possessor of thousands had he been less patriotic, less scrupulous, and less resolved to put up with his every-day distressing privations. Patent as the Chevalier's condition was to everybody, still did he stand accused of being a confederate in the dishonest transactions of which he was the innocent cause. At length relief appeared to be at hand. Poniatovsky, King of Poland, who had not forgotten the pleasant evenings he had enjoyed at sword practice with D'Eon at St. Petersburg, wrote with his own hand to offer him an asylum and employment, and for the second time, driven by want and despair, did the faithful servant's loyalty waver, for he asked permission of his cruel master to accept the invitation. But it was not to be, as de Broglio notified in his reply, approved in the King's hand.

' . . . I am not surprised that the King of Poland should have said such kind things to you through his chamberlain. This prince is acquainted with you, has heard you well spoken of in Russia, and knows how useful you might be to him ; but you should also bear in mind that you cannot serve the King elsewhere so usefully as in London, especially under present circumstances ; nor is there any other place where you can be in greater safety against the malice of your enemies than in London. Continue, therefore, your correspondence with me and his Majesty ; it is the wish of the King, who again bids you not leave England without his orders. But his Majesty approves of the correspondence you have been invited to entertain with the King of Poland. There is nothing to be apprehended in this. Being convinced of your attachment and loyalty, his Majesty authorises me to leave you at full liberty in this matter. I have only to call your attention to all that may be of interest to his Majesty, and to assure you that I shall have much pleasure in bringing to the notice of the King your services upon the present and upon all future occasions.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> May 11, 1772. Boutaric, i. 430.

Much of D'Eon's correspondence with the King at this time was pseudonymous, the assumed name being William Wolff. There is no probability, whatever, of the subjects of it becoming generally known, but it may be said that the Chevalier saved England, France, and Spain from a ruinous war that was nearly taking place on account of the dispute relative to the Falkland Islands. This was done through his secret communications with Louis XV., to whom he represented the worthlessness of those islands and their barrenness.<sup>1</sup>

De Broglio's letter of May 11, given above, was entrusted to Drouet<sup>2</sup> for delivery to the Chevalier, the startling report he made upon quickly returning to France, as the result of his interview with D'Eon, being immediately communicated by de Broglio to Louis XV.

' . . . I must not omit to inform your Majesty that the suspicions entertained on the sex of this extraordinary personage are well founded. M. Drouet, who had received my instructions to do his best to verify them, has assured me, since his return, that he has succeeded and is able to certify . . . that M. D'Eon is a female, and nothing but a female (*fille*), of which he has all the attributes . . . we must admit that this statement forms the climax to his history. . . . He begged M. Drouet to keep the secret, justly observing that if discovered his occupation were gone. May I entreat your Majesty to be pleased to allow that the confidence he has reposed in his friend be not betrayed, and that he will have no cause to regret what he has done. . . .'<sup>3</sup>

Let us here note that although D'Eon was described at this period as having a rather effeminate countenance,

<sup>1</sup> *European Magazine*, vol. xix. The Falkland Islands were taken possession of by Captain Byron in 1765, and garrisoned in the following year. Spain demanded their evacuation in 1769, which, not being complied with, the English in occupation were attacked and made prisoners. War was averted by the King of Spain disowning the acts of his commander.

<sup>2</sup> For this name, see p. 175.

<sup>3</sup> De Broglie, ii. 556, note.

blue eyes, small features, and as being pale, he had a dark beard, wore a wig and cue, and ever appeared in the same dress—that of an officer of dragoons, red with pea-green lapels and silver lace. He stood about five feet seven inches, and was rather inclined to corpulency.<sup>1</sup>

Whether or no de Broglio and the King believed in Drouet's bewildering assertion, made with so much circumstance, it is certain that no action was taken either to the prejudice or in favour of D'Eon, who was left in trust of his old office, and again forced to appeal pitifully to the count.

' . . . I am in want . . . having ceded to my mother the whole of my patrimony, and pensioned my old nurse, and having to support my nephews. . . . I venture to say, that had I been born actually as weak and timid as I appear to have been destined by nature, great evils would have been the consequences. I shall never regret having sacrificed myself to save the counsellor from sorrows and your family from troubles. . . .'<sup>2</sup>

D'Eon was sighing to leave England, and negotiations with a view to his being permitted to return to France had been conducted from time to time since the fall of de Choiseul (1770) by the new minister, the Duke d'Aiguillon; but the Chevalier comprehensively notes, with reference to that minister's proposals—*Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes*.<sup>3</sup> When the reiterated appeal for succour reached its destination, the count was again in exile at his seat, Ruffec.

In the early part of 1774, Versailles was visited by an epidemic which ran through the palace, infecting some fifty or more of its inmates (amongst them the King's

<sup>1</sup> Angelo, ii. 53.

<sup>2</sup> This letter, dated September 24, 1773, was signed William Wolff. Gaill. 197. Boutaric, ii. 442.

<sup>3</sup> Ch. MSS. 734.

daughters, Adelaide, Victoire, and Sophie), and of whom about a dozen, including Louis XV., were carried off.<sup>1</sup> Those curious to know what where the last days of the profligate and careless monarch will find, on consulting Sismondi, how a death-bed repentance was wrested from him by his confessor, the unflinching and unimpeachable Abbé Mandoux; how the old Marshal de Richelieu remonstrated angrily, and how the *fils émancipé* received absolution at the hands of the disconcerted Cardinal de la Roche-Aymon, the *grand aumônier*, who read the royal confession.

‘Although the King owes an account of his conduct to God only, he declares that he repents having been the cause of any scandal amongst his subjects, and that he wishes to live solely for the maintenance of religion and the happiness of his people.’

The interment was anything but royal, for the corpse of *le Bien-aimé* was hurried in the darkness of the night to the tomb—not its last resting-place—amidst the execrations of the numbers who had turned out to see the procession as it hastily passed their way, and who kept shouting the late King’s favourite cry on the hunting field, *tayau ! tayau !*—and *hallali ! hallali !* his favourite cry at the death, as his remains were being borne into St. Denis.

Wishing to rid himself of a tipsy customer, the keeper of a drinking-shop warned the troublesome fellow that the funeral of Louis XV. was about to pass. ‘What !’ was the answer, ‘we were dying of hunger so long as *ce b*—— *là* lived, and are we to die of thirst now that he is dead ?’<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Louis XV. died May 10, 1774. His three daughters were more familiarly known as nicknamed by their father, *Loque*, *Chiffe*, and *Graille*, interpreted into English, as Rag, Tag, and Bobtail.

<sup>2</sup> *Hist. des Français*, xxix. 507. Dutens, ii. 55. *Vie privée de Louis XV.* &c. iv. 195.



D'Eon's faith in the good intentions of his master had never deserted him, but now that master was dead; and yet, though the Chevalier lived to see the country he loved so well reap what Louis XV. had sown, his estimate of that monarch's character never changed!

'After having been so long concealed under the shadow of the wings and of the secret protection of Louis XV., in losing him I lost all. Soon after his death I became like a victim who has been publicly sacrificed. An unjust idea has ever been entertained of the character and talents of Louis XV. If the truth were but known, it would be allowed that this prince was endowed with great penetration, great judgment, and a profound knowledge of men and things. The only quality in which he was deficient, was the needed strength of character to control his ministers and ambassadors as became a King. Had Heaven endowed me with one-half the goodness of the King, my master, and my master with one-half of my firmness, not one-half of all that occurred would ever have come to pass. I need not be miserable for the rest of my days, nor fancy that my honour is tarnished, because Louis XV. would never disclose to his ministers the nature of my extraordinary position, or openly uphold the secret orders and instructions he caused to be secretly conveyed to me.'<sup>1</sup>

Scarcely had Louis XVI. ascended the throne, than the Count de Broglio addressed a memorandum to the new King, in which was recapitulated the history of the late sovereign's secret correspondence from the beginning, and describing the mode in which it had been conducted. The count exposed the anomaly of his position, then and during the two-and-twenty years that he had been secretly employed by Louis XV.; suggested the probable causes of his exile, maintained he had never fallen away from the royal favour, and asked his Majesty's instructions, for his guidance, under the peculiar circumstances in which he found himself. The King's

<sup>1</sup> Ch. MSS. 117, 961, 975, 948.

reply—laconic, formal, and unsigned—simply acknowledged the receipt of the despatch, enjoined the count to continue to observe the strictest secrecy, and informed him that inquiries should be made in the proper quarter for the reasons that induced the late King to order him into exile.<sup>1</sup> De Broglie followed up his memorandum with several letters, soliciting permission in one of them to communicate certain matters with which he considered it necessary his Majesty should become acquainted:—

‘ . . . I will commence with what concerns the *Sieur D'Eon*. I conceive it to be possible that your Majesty has heard him unfavourably spoken of, and that you are therefore astonished at finding him included amongst the number of those persons honoured with the confidence of the late King. I cannot forbear observing that he was initiated in the secret correspondence at the time it was under the direction of the Prince de Conti. He was sent to Petersburg by that prince in 1756, after which he was specially chosen by the Dukes de Praslin and de Nivernois for the negotiations for peace in London, in 1762; and the late King having at that time important designs on England, ordered him to make direct reports. He was then made Minister Plenipotentiary in England, during the interval between the Embassage of the Duke de Nivernois and the arrival of the Count de Guerchy. It is evident that it was this special mark of confidence which gave him reason to hope he would receive support in his misplaced contentions with that ambassador, who, on his part, exhibited perhaps too much hastiness at first, and a little want of tact afterwards; but this does not excuse the faults of the *Sieur D'Eon*, whose excessive hastiness was beyond all bounds, and gave rise to unseemly incidents between persons honoured as they were by the offices they respectively held. The Duke de Praslin exercised such extreme severity upon that occasion, that the *Sieur D'Eon* was not to be tranquillised, and the latter, unable to return to France, and driven to despair and into difficulties, was well-nigh failing in

<sup>1</sup> May 23, 1774. This letter is not in Boutaric. It was found amongst the count's papers by the Duke de Broglie. De Broglie, ii. 525.

his allegiance to his Majesty and about to divulge the secret confided to him, which would have shockingly compromised the sacred name of the late King, and especially in such a country as England. I was for a long time in the greatest fear. I asked his Majesty what I was to do, and took the liberty to represent to him that anything was preferable to allowing the subject of the secret correspondence to be known in England. I received orders to send my secretary to England. He knew the *Sieur D'Eon*, and appeased him a little, and it was at length arranged that he should remain in London for the purpose of communicating intelligence; but it was necessary to guarantee to him, in the late King's own hand, a monthly allowance of one thousand livres, which he has enjoyed ever since.<sup>1</sup>

'This singular being (because the *Sieur D'Eon* is a female) is, more so than many others, a compound of good qualities and of faults, and he carries the one and the other to extremes. It will be necessary that I should have the honour of entering into the minutest details on this subject, so soon as your Majesty will have definitely decided in the matter of the secret correspondence. In the meantime, I venture to take the liberty to entreat that his case be not determined until I shall have submitted my respectful observations thereon to your Majesty. I must not conclude these observations on the *Sieur D'Eon* without having the honour of stating that he occasionally signs his letters, "William Wolff." . . . '2

All the details of the secret correspondence, as they were fully treated upon by the Count de Broglio, proved entirely novel to the King, who promptly put an end to the system. The money allowed for this secret service by Louis XV. amounted to 120,000 livres annually, his confidential agents, with one sole exception, being in the service of the State, and in receipt of established salaries—as ambassadors, ministers, residents or secretaries of Embassy; but to several, the reduction of their emoluments by discontinuance of the secret correspondence

<sup>1</sup> See p. 185.

<sup>2</sup> The Count de Broglio to Louis XVI., May 30, 1774. Boutaric, ii. 392.

allowances would prove a serious inconvenience, the count therefore submitted a plan for ensuring to his former colleagues, the faithful depositaries of State secrets, a life-pension as a reward for their loyalty and discretion. Approving the scheme, the King responded liberally, and life-pensions, varying from 1,100 livres to 20,000 livres per annum, were settled upon the various members of the abolished department, D'Eon excepted, whose case necessitated special and careful consideration.

As to the count himself and his recall from exile, he insisted upon a thorough investigation into his conduct, whether as regarded his personal acts or his correspondence, both of which too clearly proved how completely removed from the slightest taint had been his loyalty and integrity of purpose.

'I have found amongst the King's effects,' wrote Louis XVI., 'several maps and papers, such as you have intimated to me, and have tied them together. I have since made every inquiry respecting yourself, and find that in all you did you acted in accordance with the King's orders. You have therefore my permission to return to Paris or to Court at Compiègne. . . . I approve of your writing to the several ministers to instruct them to discontinue the correspondence. I send you a rough draft of the letters which you must send to me for my signature. As regards yourself, sir, you will collect the whole of your papers upon your arrival in Paris, for delivery to M. de Vergennes, after which you may take your rest.'<sup>1</sup>

The Count de Vergennes had succeeded as Minister for Foreign Affairs<sup>2</sup> upon the disgrace and exile of the Duke d'Aiguillon, the avowed enemy of the de Broglies, and whose attitude towards D'Eon had been one of

<sup>1</sup> De Broglie, ii. 533.

<sup>2</sup> This minister was admitted to the secret correspondence of Louis XV. in 1755, on appointment as ambassador at Constantinople.

dangerous hostility. Rejoicing in his fall and full of hope in the new order of things, the Chevalier appealed to de Broglio for intercession in his behalf with the young King.

‘His late Majesty and you have deigned to approve, by your letters of August 22, 1766, &c., my conduct in delivering to M. Durand and the Baron de Breteuil the secret papers you required. You equally approved my conduct, by letter of February 10, 1767, in communicating to the Prince de Masseran<sup>1</sup> the discovery I had made of England’s design to invade Mexico and Peru in the approaching war, on the plan devised by the Sieur Caffaro, that is to say, the Marquis d’Aubaret, for which he receives 600*l.* sterling per annum from the English ministry. . . . You also approved, by letter of September 23, 1769, my vigilance in giving you eight months’ notice of the naval expedition projected by Russia against the Turks, and of which you were a witness. His Majesty, as also the King of England, deigned to approve my conduct in the affair of Dr. Musgrave on the subject of the peace, which created so great a sensation in London in 1769 and 1770. I will not worry you by entering into particulars on the various testimonies of approbation you have deigned to give me, on behalf of his Majesty, as to my zeal in keeping you informed of interesting events that have already occurred, that are now passing, and are yet to take place.

‘It is time, after the cruel loss we have experienced of our Counsellor-in-Chief<sup>2</sup> at Versailles, who, in the midst of his own court, had less power than a king’s advocate at the Châtelet; who, through incredible weakness, ever suffered his faithless servants to triumph over his secret servants who were true to him, and who had ever more largely favoured his declared enemies rather than his real friends; it is time, I say, that you should inform the new King, who loves truth, and of whom it is said that he is as firm as his illustrious grandfather was weak; it is time, for us both, that you should inform this young monarch of your having been the secret minister of Louis XV.

<sup>1</sup> Spanish ambassador in London.

<sup>2</sup> Louis XV.

during upwards of twenty years, and of my having been under-minister, under his orders and yours ; that during the last twelve years I have sacrificed my fortune, advancement, and happiness, in desiring to obey, to the letter, his secret order of June 3, 1763,<sup>1</sup> and the secret instructions relating thereto ;' . . .

that for particular reasons, known only to the late King, he thought it his duty to sacrifice him, openly, to the wrath of his ambassador de Guerchy, to that of his ministers, and to the hysterics of de Pompadour ; but that his sense of justice and kindness of heart had never, in secret, allowed him to abandon him, but that he had, on the contrary, given him, in his own hand his royal promise to reward and justify him in the future.

. . . ' Posterity could never believe in these facts, had not you and I all the necessary documents to establish them, together with others still more incredible. . . . Had the late good King not expelled the Jesuits from his kingdom, and had he a Carmuel or a Malagrida for his confessor, nobody would have been surprised ; but, thank God, I hope the new King will soon deliver you and me out of our embarrassments. I trust that no Jesuit will ever be his confessor, friend, or minister, whether he be disguised as priest, chancellor, duke and peer, courtier or courtesan.' <sup>2</sup>

De Broglie had said much more in his favour to Louis XVI. than he chose to tell D'Eon, and he now conveyed to him the King's desire that he should continue to make his reports in cypher, addressing all such communications to the Count de Vergennes.

<sup>1</sup> See p. 77.

<sup>2</sup> July 7 1774. Boutaric, ii. 434.

## CHAPTER XIII.

The Count de Broglio's offers for the surrender of the King's papers—D'Eon's conditions—Failure of the transaction—Proposal of marriage to (Mademoiselle) D'Eon—Beaumarchais—The Madame Dubarry scandal—De Vergennes' instructions to Beaumarchais—That minister's high opinion of D'Eon—Beaumarchais' success in treating with D'Eon.

So far as the ministers were concerned, the Chevalier D'Eon was regarded in the light of a rebel and traitor, when all of which he could have stood convicted was, like poor Clinker, 'hunger, wretchedness, and want ; but de Broglio and the King knew otherwise. The compromising papers with the existence of which we have become so familiar, were still in his possession, and their immediate recovery having become an absolute necessity, the count was directed to arrange in a kindly and generous spirit for their surrender. He accordingly sent to London the Marquis de Prunevaux, an officer of distinction and a kinsman of the Duke de Nivernois, to propose the following conditions :—D'Eon to give up every document relating to the late King's private or official correspondence ; to give his word of honour to abstain, ever thereafter, from writing anything of a nature likely to awaken the recollections of his contentions with de Guerchy and de Praslin, and to avoid all such places where he would be liable to meet the Countess de Guerchy and her children. In return, he should receive a life-pension of twelve thousand livres,<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This was the largest pension about to be conferred upon any of the secret agents, with one exception, that of General Mokronosky, 'a Polish patriot,' who was awarded twenty thousand livres a year.

have his military rank restored to him, all charges pending against him should be withdrawn, and a safe conduct signed by the King granted, enabling him to return to France and live in any part of the country most agreeable to himself. But D'Eon had lost his beloved master, whose slightest wish had ever been a law to him; he knew that his occupation was gone, but he thought he might recover the position he had lost if he played his cards well, and accordingly rejected the terms, substituting his own instead, in which he asked—(1) that his conduct should be purged of the calumnies imputed to it by the Duke de Praslin and the Count de Guerchy, and that he should be reinstated in the diplomatic rank and title he had held, as was done to the celebrated La Chalotais;<sup>1</sup> and (2) that all sums and indemnities due to him during the past twenty-one years, amounting altogether to 13,933*l.* sterling, or 318,477 livres, should be paid to him in full.

In urging his claims to a sum of such large proportions, the Chevalier's argument was a repetition of what he had advanced in days gone by, when soliciting Louis XV. and de Broglie for pecuniary assistance:—

‘All the debts I have contracted in England are the natural consequences of the orders I received from the King being contradictory to those of the Duke de Praslin; a natural consequence of the means to which I had recourse in defence of my honour and of my life; a natural consequence of the measures I adopted to prevent my person and papers from being carried off out of England, and a natural consequence of the criminal proceedings I was obliged to institute against the late Count de Guerchy, for having poisoned me at his table, and for having ordered and bribed de Vergy to assassinate me in London; also

<sup>1</sup> La Chalotais, *procureur-général* of the Parliament of Brittany, arrested on a charge of having written seditious letters to the King. Although falsely accused, he was exiled by Louis XV., but recalled and reinstated by Louis XVI.



for having sought to kidnap me—all atrocious crimes of which I adduced proofs at the trial, notwithstanding the indignation of the French Court, notwithstanding the presence of the ambassador, who owed his escape from the punishment he richly merited simply to a *nolle prosequi* mercifully granted by the King of England, in answer to his supplication, and to the everlasting disgrace of the said ambassador.’<sup>1</sup>

De Prunevaux remonstrated that the sum demanded was prodigious.

‘Prodigious for you,’ replied D’Eon, ‘who insist on crown pieces doing duty in a country where guineas are fingered! Prodigious in your native Morvan, where a horse costs two louis, an ox six livres, and an ass a crown; but as for me, I have been living for the last thirteen years in London, where a turkey costs six livres before it is roasted!’

Notwithstanding a four months’ residence in London, De Prunevaux could not prevail upon the Chevalier to leave England, for he insisted, after the example of the brave and virtuous La Chalotais, on a temporary re-establishment in his post of plenipotentiary which he occupied with distinction, and from which Madame de Pompadour, with a cabal of the great, by little and base intrigues expelled him; deeming all pecuniary satisfaction beneath his honour, gold being but a means and not the object of great souls.<sup>2</sup>

De Broglio’s friendly remonstrances and reproaches were without effect upon D’Eon, who became the more obdurate from the moment that de Prunevaux resolutely, and once for all, refused to entertain any such idea as his reinstatement to his former official position. De Prunevaux was succeeded by Captain Pommereux of the Grenadiers, ordered to treat with D’Eon on the basis of an

<sup>1</sup> Ch. MSS. 859.

<sup>2</sup> *London Evening Post*, April 18—20, 1775.

indemnity ; but the only concession the Chevalier would make being to reduce his claim to 256,000 livres, de Vergennes submitted to the King that since a high sum was still persisted in, it would be unwise to underrate the importance of keeping on good terms with the Chevalier, and recommended that for the present, at least, his quarterly allowance should be paid as before, anticipating that he would become more tractable with time, and if less importance were attached to the recovery of the papers of which he was the depository. Louis XVI. approved, but said that he had never read a more impertinent or ridiculous letter than D'Eon's,<sup>1</sup> and were it not for the safety of the documents, he should certainly send him about his business.<sup>2</sup> I cannot conclude this paragraph without noticing that the gallant captain became so thoroughly persuaded, during his stay in London, of the truth of the reports on the presumed sex of the Chevalier, that he became enamoured of the heroine, and actually proposed marriage before taking his departure for France !

There now appears on the scene a remarkable man, one who, relying upon his abilities, of which he was singularly vain, was prepared to act as mediator, and by pursuing a policy of something like oppression, bring D'Eon to his bearings. This was no less an individual than Beaumarchais, the watchmaker's apprentice, lieutenant-general of the royal hunt, champion of the Americans in revolt against Britain, and in the secret service of Louis XVI., but more universally known, perhaps, as the author of '*Le Barbier de Seville*,' a play first published with the authority of that sovereign, and unjustly condemned for a season as being a plagiarist on

<sup>1</sup> Containing a detailed statement of his claims.

<sup>2</sup> Boutaric, ii. 444-445.

Molière's 'Ecole des Femmes.' When D'Eon and Beaumarchais met for the first time, the latter was in London on a mission from the King, in which D'Eon was likewise concerned, and it is scarcely to be doubted he was under instructions from de Vergennes to make the Chevalier's acquaintance with a view to entering eventually into further relations with him. By Beaumarchais' management were shaped the destinies of D'Eon, who has left a record of how they met and what their intercourse, in a written statement he addressed to the Count de Vergennes, on May 27, 1776,<sup>1</sup> and from which we quote the following passages :—

'There was in 1773, and there still is, in England, a libelling adventurer named Thôveneau de Morande, the counterpart of the Sieur Goudard described by me elsewhere. He had set up a newspaper called "Le Gazetier Cuirassé," a sort of laboratory for defamation of character, in which he abused everybody and dealt in slander. Before printing "Le Gazetier Cuirassé," he wrote to all those persons (including M. de Voltaire) whom it was his intention to defame, to demand a certain sum of money if they did not wish such abominations to be made public. The Marquis de Villette, one of those to whom he had written, replied :—

"You scoundrel! You demand fifty louis that you may not publish certain facts in which I am concerned; if you give me one hundred, I will supply you with many other facts far more curious and private, which you can add to your manuscript. I await your answer."

'2. In a letter dated July 6, 1773, Louis XV. and his secret minister, the Count de Broglio, instructed the Chevalier D'Eon to find out whether M. de Morande was really at work on

<sup>1</sup> 'The Campaigns of the Sieur Caron de Beaumarchais in England during the years 1774, 1775 and 1776; or, a Summary of what preceded and followed the singular proceedings of M. Caron de Beaumarchais during his pretended Negotiations in London with the pretended Chevalier D'Eon de Beaumont.'—*Mém. de la Chevalière D'Eon*, ii. 179. *Archives des affaires étrangères*. Gaill. 218.

"Notes on the Life of Madame la Comtesse Dubarry,"<sup>1</sup> and what sum would suffice to induce M. de Morande to give up his MS. and the publication of it.'

To which the Chevalier D'Eon replied, under date of July 13-18, 1773 :—

'You could not have recourse to anybody more able to assist and bring to a satisfactory termination the affair you have mentioned to me, M. Morande being a countryman of mine, who boasts of being connected with a branch of my family in Burgundy. . . . For two months I refused to make his acquaintance for very good reasons. He has so frequently called since, that I have occasionally received him rather than be annoyed by a young man of an exceedingly turbulent and impetuous disposition, who knows no bounds, and without any respect for things sacred or profane. Such is the man. . . . *Fœnum habet in cornu, tu Romane, caveto.* This is why I keep him at a certain distance. . . .

'He is a man who swindles several rich people in Paris through fear of his pen. He has produced the most outrageous libel it is possible to conceive against the Count de Lauraguais, with whom he picked a quarrel. The King of England (himself so frequently attacked in the papers) asked, with reference to this affair, what he thought of English liberty.'

'I have nothing to complain of, Sire,' replied the count, 'it treats me like a King.'

'I am not aware that Morande is at work on the scandalous account of the Dubarry family; but I have very strong suspicions that such is the case. If it should be so, there is nobody in a better position than I am to negotiate for its being relinquished; he is very fond of his wife, and I undertake to get her to do anything I wish. . . . I believe that if he were offered 800 guineas he would be quite satisfied. I know that he is in want of money just now, and I will do my best to arrange for a smaller sum. But, sir, to tell you the truth, I should be delighted if the money were given to him by some

<sup>1</sup> Madame Dubarry became the favourite of Louis XV. in 1769, five years after the death of de Pompadour. According to Boutaric the title of the pamphlet was: *Secret Memoirs of a Courtesan.*

other person, so that nobody will suppose that I have made a single guinea by such a business.'

'3. M. D'Eon is on the point of concluding the bargain in consideration of the sum of 800*l.* sterling, M. Morande giving his bond that he will pay 1,000*l.* sterling to the poor of the parish, should he hereafter be convicted before a tribunal, of having caused to be printed any work to the prejudice of the late King, of his mistresses or ministers.'

'4. M. D'Eon receives another letter from the Count de Broglio, dated August 26, 1773, approved by the King, in which he is instructed to suspend his negotiations with Morande, seeing that the celebrated Count Dubarry had taken other measures; but he is to watch Morande and his publications.'

'5. Secret emissaries of police arrive in London for the purpose of kidnapping Morande. The scheme fails, and the frightened emissaries promptly make their escape to Paris.'

'6. Under censure of the Parliament of Paris, Beaumarchais is on the point of being arrested, when he takes refuge in the King's wardrobe, an asylum worthy of such a personage.'

'7. M. de la Borde, the late King's valet-de-chambre,<sup>1</sup> confides to Beaumarchais, in the gloom of the wardrobe, that the King's heart is saddened by a rascally libel on the amours of the charming Dubarry, in the course of being written in London by the scoundrel Morande.'

'8. . . . The Sieur Caron entertains hope of success in fawning to his master's love affairs, humbling his enemies and increasing his own fortune. He communicates to la Borde his design of going to London, and secretly bribing with gold the already corrupted Morande. This project is communicated by la Borde to Louis XV., who deigns to give his approval.'

'9. Accordingly, Beaumarchais arrives in London *incognito*, escorted by the Count de Lauraguais *in publico*.'

'10. The day of their arrival, Morande calls on M. D'Eon to inform him that two French noblemen had been to see him that morning, with their pockets full of gold, to invite him

<sup>1</sup> The King's head valet enjoyed the privilege of being in constant communication with the sovereign, frequently playing the part of a spy at Court. The coveted office was held in the preceding reign by the Marquis de Termes, who was in great favour with Louis XIV.

to suppress his work against the Countess Dubarry; but not wishing to conclude any arrangement without first consulting M. D'Eon, who was the first to commence negotiations on this business, the two noblemen had remained in their coach at the corner of the street, and desired to confer with him.'

'11. M. D'Eon asks Morande the names of these two French noblemen, and whether they bring letters to him from Versailles or Paris. . . . Morande declares they wish to preserve the strictest incognito.'

'12. M. D'Eon replies that he has no wish to confer with unknown individuals; they might be emissaries of police who would induce him to say what he would rather leave unsaid; that the love affairs of kings were ticklish matters to meddle in. . . . The only advice he could offer to Morande, encumbered as he is with a wife and family and debts, in so expensive a place as London, and pursuing a dangerous avocation comparable to that of a highwayman, would be to exact the largest sum out of the richest gilt coach he might meet. His own coach could only offer 800*l.* sterling for the suppression of the libel. . . .'

'13. A few days later, M. D'Eon learns that the two unknown nobles are, the unknown noble, Caron de Beaumarchais, and the most illustrious and well-known noble, Louis François Brancas, Count de Lauraguais, and that they had concluded an agreement with Théveneau de Morande, in the name of Louis XV., for the suppression of his libel in consideration of the sum of 1,500 louis, in cash, and a life-pension of 4,000 francs, to be reduced to a life-pension of 2,000 livres in favour of his wife, should she survive him. . . .'<sup>1</sup>

'14. Morande not ceasing to trouble M. D'Eon with his obtrusive visits, the latter was induced to tell him that he was curious to make the acquaintance of such a man as Beaumarchais, because the papers he had published gave him reason to suppose, judging by the boldness of his style and opinions, that there was still a man left in Paris.'

<sup>1</sup> Morande gave up six thousand impressions of this pamphlet, the whole of which, with one exception, were destroyed in a glass-house at *Marybone*. The one copy preserved was cut into two parts, one part being kept by Beaumarchais, the other by Morande, for the purpose of verifying other editions should the issue of them be attempted. Had any appeared, Morande would have forfeited his pension.

'15. . . . Morande brought him to my house when he came to London for the third time, and thus we saw each other, led no doubt by a curiosity natural to extraordinary animals to meet one another.'

'16. In May, 1775, I saw this rake whom I might call, without offence, by the name of that animal who with his eyes turned up, and his snout to the ground, searches for truffles in my country. After several interviews and conferences, he became acquainted with some of the circumstances of my political and physical condition.'

'17. He was profuse in his offers to be of service at Versailles, and I accepted. Like a drowning man abandoned, so to say, by the late King and his private minister for high reasons of state, to the current of an infected river, I hung on for an instant to the boat of Caron as I would to a red-hot rod of iron. Although I took the precaution to protect my hands with gauntlets, I had my fingers burnt after all. . . .'

According to Loménie,<sup>1</sup> D'Eon *solicited the assistance of Beaumarchais*, and that he might the more effectively enlist his sympathies, confessed to him, with tears, that he was a female, which, never doubting, and delighted at the prospect of obliging a woman become interesting by her daring courage, political talents and misfortunes, and wishing also to bring to a successful issue a somewhat difficult task, Beaumarchais wrote some touching words to Louis XVI. in favour of his client.

'When it is considered that this creature, so persecuted, is of a sex to which all is forgiven, the heart is moved with sweet compassion. . . . I venture to assure you, Sire, that in treating this wonderful creature with tact and gentleness, even though she be soured by twelve years of misfortune, she will be easily prevailed upon to submit herself, and give up the whole of the late King's papers on reasonable conditions.'

Having familiarised himself with D'Eon's story, his

<sup>1</sup> *Beaumarchais et son temps*, i. 418.

difficulties and necessities, Beaumarchais returned to Versailles, and exaggerating the importance of the hidden secret correspondence, although he had not seen any of it, pleaded the cause of his new client, and secured for himself the congenial employment of treating for the King's papers by instructions contained in a letter from the Count de Vergennes, in which allusion is made for the first time to the Chevalier's change of sex, although spoken of throughout in the masculine gender.

' . . . You have the King's authority to agree to every reasonable guarantee upon which M. D'Eon may insist, for the regular payment of his pension of 12,000 livres, on the understanding, however, that he will not claim an annuity to that amount when out of France; the capital to be devoted to the realisation of this sum is not at my disposition, and I shall experience much difficulty in obtaining it; but it is easy enough to convert the pension into a life-annuity, of which the title-deed would be given up. The liquidation of debts will be a difficult matter, M. D'Eon's claims in this respect being very great, and he must reduce them considerably to enable us to come to terms. As you are not to allow it to appear that you are sent to him on a mission, you will enjoy the advantage of his having to wait upon you, and you will thus be in a position to dictate terms. M. D'Eon is of a violent disposition, but I believe him to be an honest fellow, and I will do him the justice to say that I am quite persuaded he is incapable of treachery. It is impossible for M. D'Eon to take leave of the King of England; the disclosure of his sex renders such a thing impracticable; it would be casting ridicule upon the two Courts. . . . a certificate will be granted, provided he remains satisfied with the praise that his zeal, intelligence, and loyalty have merited; but we cannot compliment him on his moderation and submission, and in no case must there be any allusion to his disputes with M. de Guerchy. You are an enlightened man, and I have no misgivings that you will make a good bargain with D'Eon, if such a thing is to be done at all. If you fail, then we



must take it for granted that we cannot expect to meet with success, and make up our minds for the worst. Our first feelings will be disagreeable, but the consequences will be terrible to D'Eon. It is very humiliating to an exile to turn traitor. He becomes an object of contempt.'<sup>1</sup>

Even though the Count de Vergennes was thus engaged in determining the final disposal of D'Eon, such was the opinion continued to be entertained of his devotion to his country, of his abilities and usefulness, that we see him recommended by that minister to the new French ambassador in London, as being a *man* fully competent to obtain information of which they stood in need, and this at a time that France was still guided by a feeling of hostility towards the rebels against British authority in America.

*The Count de Vergennes to the Count de Guines.*

'Versailles, June 23, 1775.

'... You will be good enough not to neglect any opportunity for assuring his Britannic Majesty of the King's sentiments towards him, and his wish for the establishment of the most perfect understanding between them as sovereigns, on the basis of the peace and friendship that so happily exists. The principles of moderation and justice by which the King is constantly guided, and which directs him in all his resolutions, should serve to reassure his Britannic Majesty on the nature of our views, sought to be misrepresented by the enemies to public peace. Far from desiring to take advantage of England's difficulties under the present aspect of affairs in America, we would rather be able to assist in extricating her. The spirit of revolt, wherever it may break out, is always a dangerous example. There are mental as well as physical maladies, and both may become contagious. . . . We have no wish to carry our precautions to such a point as to alarm the English. I request that you will keep a strict watch over the changes we

<sup>1</sup> June 21, 1775. Loménie, i. 419.

may expect to see, and especially over what Lord Chatham might effect on the mind of the King of England, should he yield, as reported, to the solicitations of that prince for the purpose of drawing him towards himself. Perhaps M. D'Eon will be able to procure for you some interesting information on this subject. If you believe in the possibility of entertaining direct relations with him, I know that he will not refuse to be of service to you. His heart is ever French, although his misfortunes and hasty temperament seem sometimes to have estranged him. He has friends in the opposition, which is by no means a bad channel for obtaining information.'<sup>1</sup>

To resume. Beaumarchais' earliest success consisted in obtaining from the Chevalier the keys of an iron safe said to contain the King's secret papers, and which Lord Ferrers was supposed to hold as security from D'Eon for the loan of five thousand pounds.

' . . . I place at your disposal, Captain D'Eon, a brave officer, an accomplished diplomatist, and possessing all the virile qualities of manhood so far as his head is concerned. I bring to the King the keys of an iron safe securely sealed with my own seal, and in safe deposit, and containing all the papers it is necessary for the King to have. It is thus that I served the late King in the case of another exile whose pen was dreaded.<sup>2</sup> At any rate, the King and you may remain perfectly well assured that matters in England will remain *in statu quo* during my absence, when completing with you the task I have commenced with D'Eon. . . . I take advantage of the first sure opportunity for having a letter posted at Calais to inform you, without its being known in London, that I have placed in the King's hands certain papers, and an individual whom it was sought, at any price, to employ against him . . . people are curiously inquiring what I am doing here ! . . . '

The letter intimating to Beaumarchais, for the first

<sup>1</sup> *Archives des affaires étrangères.* Gaill. 214.

<sup>2</sup> *Morande.*

<sup>3</sup> Beaumarchais to the Count de Vergennes, July 14, 1775. Gaill. 231.

time, that D'Eon should, in the future, be considered a female, was succeeded two months later by another ministerial despatch, in which allusion is made, also for the first time, to the necessity for his complete change of sex by the assumption of female attire; the Count de Vergennes, as will be noticed, still referring to the Chevalier by employing the personal pronoun of the masculine gender.

‘ . . . However great my desire to see, to know, and to converse with M. D'Eon, I do not conceal from you that I have one cause for anxiety. His enemies are on the alert, and will not easily forgive him for all he has said of them. Should he come here, however prudent and circumspect he may be, they might impute to him conduct in opposition to the reserve imposed by the King; denials and justifications are always embarrassing and odious to the well-meaning. Should M. D'Eon consent to disguise himself, all would be well; it is a proposition that can emanate from himself alone; but in his own interest it is desirable that he should avoid, at least for some years, a residence in France and necessarily in Paris. You may make such use of these observations as you think proper.’<sup>1</sup>

Having displayed his keys at Versailles, and assured de Vergennes that four days would suffice to regulate affairs finally with D'Eon, Beaumarchais returned to London, the first step he took being to inform the Chevalier, in the clearest terms, that as the primary condition of all future negotiations it was absolutely necessary she should agree to resuming female attire. D'Eon became very noisy upon receiving intimation for which he was so little prepared, and persistently refused to assent; but the determined attitude and dictatorial bearing assumed by Beaumarchais were not without effect, and for the first time in his life, perhaps, he quailed, and in the end, yielded.

<sup>1</sup> August 26, 1775. *Loménie*, i. 421.

'All this has afforded me the opportunity for becoming better acquainted with the creature with whom I have to deal. . . . the feeling of resentment against the late ministers and their friends of thirty years' standing is so strong in her, that too great a barrier cannot be placed between the contenders. Written promises to be prudent do not suffice to keep in check one whose blood boils at the simple mention of Guerchy. The positive declaration of her sex, and her promise to live for ever after in female attire, will be the only means of putting an end for the future to all kind of clamour and its consequences. I have been resolute in exacting this, and have succeeded.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Beaumarchais to the Count de Vergennes, October 7, 1775. *Loménie*, i. 422.

## CHAPTER XIV.

D'Eon surrenders the King's papers—Earl Ferrers' share in their custody—Covenant between Beaumarchais and D'Eon, who receives permission to return to France—and is ordered to resume female attire.

THE next few weeks were employed in arranging the terms of that Covenant by which D'Eon irrevocably bound himself to renounce his style as a man, and appear for ever thereafter in the character of a female, that being the sex to which he more properly belonged. During this interval also the iron safe was opened, and its contents declared by Beaumarchais to be far from meriting the importance attached to them. D'Eon insisted, on the contrary, that they were very precious, including, as they did, the earliest instructions supplied to the Duke de Nivernois on his proceeding to England; the earliest despatches of that minister giving the secret details of the negotiations for peace; and the family pact of the House of Bourbon, together with the secret convention—the whole of which were made up into four bundles; but he admitted that the papers of the greatest consequence were not in the iron safe at all. To produce these he took Beaumarchais to his residence, led him into his bedroom, and from beneath the flooring withdrew four parcels securely sealed and directed: *Secret papers to be given to the King only*, which, he avowed, completed the collection. D'Eon then drew up a list of the whole, in detail, Beaumarchais affixing his initials and a numeral to each sheet as he hastily perused it.

In conferring with Lord Ferrers, whose name appeared on D'Eon's list as one of his principal creditors, Beaumarchais shrewdly observed that either the debt owed to him was imaginary, or his debtor had been imposing upon him, by obtaining large sums of money on the security of papers held to be of considerable importance, but which papers had never really been consigned to him, they having been concealed in his own residence. To this Lord Ferrers replied that he regretted Beaumarchais should seek to create a breach between his friend the Chevalier and himself—he little cared to which sex he belonged—as he valued him for the spirit he showed and for his virtues. He had not been deceived, he said, on the nature of the papers in the iron safe, represented to have been State papers, and having seen the inventory of them, signed by Beaumarchais himself, he was more than ever convinced of the Chevalier's honesty and truthfulness, such papers being all he could have desired as security for his money. Even had his creditor died, he might have easily recovered what was owed to him, for the Court of France, or at any rate, the British Court, would have paid ten times the sum he claimed, rather than that publicity should be given to their contents. He was surprised, he added, at the dishonourable treatment by the French Court and its ministers of so extraordinary a person as the Chevalier D'Eon, who had worthily served his country, and yet had been so badly used.

Defending himself against the charge of having deceived Lord Ferrers, D'Eon says:—

‘M. de Beaumarchais makes me aver, upon his own private authority, what I never thought of or said. When I deposited the iron safe with his lordship he never even asked to see the

outside coverings of the papers. He trusted entirely to my word when I declared to him that it contained State papers, and the detailed list signed by M. de Beaumarchais has proved to his lordship that I told the truth. . . . I know how to conduct myself abroad, and especially amongst the natural enemies of France, with the prudence and policy acquired by long experience and a residence of twenty-two years in foreign lands. Mine was consequently an act of wisdom and prudence, in not revealing to an admiral, an English peer allied to the royal family, the fact of my holding secret correspondence with the King, and that the said voluminous correspondence was hidden beneath the flooring of my bed-chamber. It was for me alone to know this, and that the papers were near a mine of gunpowder which would have blown all into the air had any attempt been made to drive me out of my last retrenchment. How can M. de Beaumarchais distinguish by the name of deceit the reticence I have necessarily observed towards everybody except himself, coming to me as he did, in behalf of the King and of his minister? Should he not rather blush at having betrayed to an English nobleman, through a feeling of revenge, my secret, which was that of the late King, who commanded me not to breathe a word thereon to any living soul? But M. de Beaumarchais thinks that all secrets, even the most important of State secrets, are but green-room secrets.<sup>1</sup>

In the Covenant<sup>2</sup> between Beaumarchais and D'Eon, settling the terms for the surrender of the King's papers, and the return of the latter to France, the emendations and alterations, as they appear in footnotes, are written in the Chevalier's hand.

'We, the under-signed, Pierre-Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais, specially entrusted with the private instructions of the King of France, dated Versailles, August 25, 1775, communicated to the Chevalier D'Eon in London, and of which a

<sup>1</sup> Note by D'Eon, written in 1776 (?)

<sup>2</sup> 'Dictated by M. de Beaumarchais, then corrected by him and the Chevalier D'Eon.'—Note by D'Eon.

copy certified by me shall be annexed to the present act—on the one part :

‘ And Demoiselle Charles - Geneviève - Louise - Auguste - André-Timothée D'Eon de Beaumont, spinster of age, hitherto known by the name of the Chevalier D'Eon, squire, formerly captain of dragoons, knight of the royal and military order of Saint Louis, aide-de-camp to Marshal the Duke and to the Count de Broglio, minister plenipotentiary from France at the Court of Great Britain, late doctor of civil law and of canon law, advocate in the Parliament of Paris, Censor Royal for history and *belles-lettres* ; sent to Russia with the Chevalier Douglas for effecting the reconciliation of the two Courts, secretary of Embassy to the Marquis de l'Hôpital, ambassador plenipotentiary from France at the Court of her Imperial Majesty of all the Russias, and secretary of Embassy to the Duke de Nivernois, ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary from France to England for the conclusion of the late peace, are agreed upon what follows, and have subscribed our names :

‘ Art I. That I, Caron de Beaumarchais, do require, in the name of the King, that all official and private papers having reference to the several political negotiations with which the Chevalier D'Eon has been entrusted in England, notably those concerning the peace of 1763, correspondence, minutes, copies of letters, cyphers, &c., at present deposited with Lord Ferrers, Earl, Peer, and Admiral, of Upper Seymour Street, Portman Square, London, ever a particular friend of the said Chevalier D'Eon in the course of his troubles and law-suits in England, that the said papers, enclosed in a large iron safe of which I have the key, be delivered to me after having been initialled by me and by the said Chevalier D'Eon, and of which the inventory shall be added and annexed to the present act, as a proof that the said papers have been faithfully delivered.

‘ Art. II. That all papers of the secret correspondence between the Chevalier D'Eon, the late King, and the several persons entrusted by his Majesty to entertain that correspondence, designated in the letters by the names *deputy*, *solicitor*, in the same way in which his Majesty himself was styled the *counsellor*—which secret correspondence was concealed beneath the flooring of the bed-chamber of the said Chevalier D'Eon,



whence it was withdrawn by him, on October 5 of the present year, in my presence alone, being carefully sealed and addressed, *To the King only, at Versailles*—That all the copies of the said letters, minutes, the cyphers, &c., shall be delivered to me, equally attested with initials, and with an exact inventory, the said secret correspondence consisting of five portfolios or thick volumes in quarto.

‘ Art. III. That the said Chevalier D’Eon is to desist from every kind of proceeding, judicial or personal, against the memory of the late Count de Guerchy, his adversary, the successors to his title, the members of his family, &c., and undertakes never to revive any such proceedings under whatsoever form, unless he be forced thereto by judicial or personal provocation on the part of some relative, friend, or adherent of that family; for which there can be no longer any apprehension, his Majesty having, in his wisdom, taken every necessary precaution to prevent the recurrence, in the future, of any such unseemly quarrels, whether on the one side or on the other.

‘ Art. IV. And to the end that an insurmountable barrier be for ever raised between the contending parties, and that all ideas of law-suits or personal quarrels, no matter whence they arise, be permanently nullified, I require, in the name of his Majesty, that the disguise which has to this day enabled a female to pass for the Chevalier D’Eon, shall entirely cease, and without seeking to blame Charles-Geneviève-Louise-Auguste-André-Timothée D’Eon de Beaumont for a concealment of condition and sex, the responsibility of which rests entirely with her relatives,<sup>1</sup> and whilst rendering justice to the prudent, decorous, and circumspect conduct she has at all times observed in the dress of her adoption whilst preserving a manly and vigorous bearing; I require, absolutely, that the ambiguity of her sex, which has afforded inexhaustible material for gossip, indecent betting, and idle jesting liable to be renewed, especially in France, which his pride would not tolerate, and which would give rise to fresh quarrels that could only serve, perhaps, to palliate and renew former ones; I require, absolutely, I say, in the name of the King, that the phantom Chevalier D’Eon shall entirely disappear, and that the public mind shall for ever be set

<sup>1</sup> ‘ Father and uncle.’

at rest by a distinct, precise, and unambiguous declaration, publicly made, of the true sex of Charles-Geneviève-Louise-Auguste-André-Timothée D'Eon de Beaumont before she returns to France—her resumption of female attire settling for ever the public mind with regard to her; with all of which she should the more readily comply just now,<sup>1</sup> considering how interesting she will appear to both sexes, all being in like manner honoured by the incidents of her life, her courage, and her talents. Upon which conditions I will deliver to her the safe-conduct on parchment, signed by the King and his Minister for Foreign Affairs, which allows her to return to France and there remain under the special and immediate protection of his Majesty, who is desirous not only of according protection and security under his royal word, but who is good enough to change the yearly pension of 12,000 livres, granted by the late King in 1766, and which has been paid to her punctually to this day, into a life-annuity of the same amount, with an acknowledgment that the capital for the said annuity has already been provided and advanced by the said Chevalier D'Eon in furthering the concerns of the late King, besides other larger sums,<sup>2</sup> the total of which will be remitted by me for the liquidation of her debts in England, with a copy on parchment of the deed for the said annuity of 12,000 livres tournois, dated September 28, 1775.

‘And I, Charles-Geneviève-Louise-Auguste-André-Timothée D'Eon de Beaumont, spinster of age, hitherto known as the Chevalier D'Eon as above styled, submit to the whole of the above conditions imposed in the name of the King, solely that I may afford to his Majesty the greatest possible proofs of my respect and submission, although it would have been far more agreeable to me had he deigned to employ me again in his army or in the diplomatic service, in compliance with my earnest solicitations and in accordance with my seniority—And because, excepting some exhibition of feeling rendered in a

<sup>1</sup> ‘Seeing that <sup>his</sup><sub>her</sub> (*son sexe*) sex has been proved by witnesses, physicians, surgeons, matrons and legal documents.’—Inserted in the margin by D'Eon and cancelled by Beaumarchais.

<sup>2</sup> Tardy admission of the justice of D'Eon's claims against the State, vainly urged during many years.

measure excusable from a legitimate and natural desire to defend oneself, and the most justifiable resentment, his Majesty is pleased to allow that, as an officer, I have always behaved with bravery, and that I have been a laborious, intelligent, and discreet political agent.

'I submit to declaring publicly my sex, to my condition being established beyond a doubt, to resume and wear female attire<sup>1</sup> until death, unless, taking into consideration my being so long accustomed to appear in uniform, his Majesty will consent, on sufferance only, to my resuming male attire should it become impossible for me to endure the embarrassment of adopting the other, after having tried to accustom myself to it at the *abbaye-royale* of the Bernardine ladies of Saint-Antoine-des-Champs, Paris, or at any such other convent as I might select, to which I wish to withdraw for some months on arriving in France.

'I declare that I entirely relinquish all proceedings, judicial or personal, to the prejudice of the late Count de Guernsey and of his successors, promising never to renew them unless forced to such a step by judicial proceedings as above stated.

'I further pledge my word of honour, that I will deliver to M. Caron de Beaumarchais all official and secret papers, whether concerning the Embassy or the above said secret correspondence, without reserving or retaining to myself a single document, upon the following conditions, to which I entreat his Majesty's approval:—

“1. Seeing that the letter of the late King, my most honoured lord and master, dated Versailles, April 1, 1766, by which he insured to me the annual pension of 12,000 livres until such time as he should improve my position, is of no further service to me so far as the said pension is concerned, which has been changed, to my advantage, by the King his successor, into a life-annuity of like amount—That the original letter should remain in my possession as testimony of the honour the late King deigned to bestow on my loyalty, my innocence, and my irreproachable conduct during all my troubles, and in all matters he deigned to confide to me, whether in Russia, whilst serving in his army, or in England.

<sup>1</sup> 'That I have already worn upon several occasions known to his Majesty.'—Inserted by D'Eon and cancelled by Beaumarchais.

“ 2. That the original receipt given to me in London on July 11, 1766, by M. Durand, minister plenipotentiary in England,<sup>1</sup> in exchange for the secret order of the late King, dated Versailles, June 3, 1763, delivered by me to him, intact, and of my own free-will, shall remain in my possession, as authentic testimony of the complete submission with which I gave up the secret order in the own hand of the King my master, which of itself justified the course of my conduct in England, so often described as being obstinacy by my enemies, and which, in their ignorance of my extraordinary situation in relation to the King, they have even dared to qualify as high treason.

“ 3. That his Majesty will deign, as a special favour, to satisfy himself at the expiration of every six months, as did the late King, of my being alive and of my whereabouts, to prevent my enemies from ever again being tempted to undertake anything to the prejudice of my honour, my liberty, my person, and my life.

“ 4. That the cross of Saint Louis, won by me at the peril of my life, in combats, sieges, and battles in which I took part, where I was wounded, and served as aide-de-camp to the general and as captain of dragoons and of volunteers in Broglio's army, with bravery to which all those generals under whom I served have borne witness, shall never be taken from me, and that the right to wear it on any garments I may adopt shall be conceded to me for life.

“ And if I may be permitted to add a respectful demand to these conditions, I would venture to observe that, at the moment I am about to obey his Majesty in consenting to abandon for ever my male attire, I am entirely destitute of everything—linen, clothing, and apparel suited to my sex, and that I have no money to procure even ordinary necessities, M. de Beaumarchais being well aware who is to receive the amount destined in part payment of my debts, and of which I do not wish to touch one *sou*. Consequently, although I have no right to expect further favours from his Majesty, I do not refrain from soliciting at his hands the gift of a sum of money for the purchase of my female outfit, this unexpected, extraordinary, and compulsory expense not being my own idea, but uniquely in obedience to his orders.”

<sup>1</sup> See p. 185.

'And I, Caron de Beaumarchais, still as above styled, I leave with the said Demoiselle D'Eon de Beaumont the original letter conferring so much distinction, which the late King wrote to her from Versailles, April 1, 1766, when awarding her a pension of twelve thousand livres in acknowledgment of faithful services.

'I further leave with her M. Durand's original document. Neither of these papers can be taken from her by me without harshness that would ill accord with the benevolent and equitable intentions at present entertained by his Majesty towards the said Demoiselle D'Eon de Beaumont. As to the cross of Saint Louis, which she desires to retain with the right of wearing it in female attire, I must admit that, notwithstanding the exceeding kindness with which his Majesty has deigned to trust to my prudence, zeal, and intelligence in the conduct of this affair, I am afraid I should be exceeding my powers in determining so delicate a question.

'Considering, on the other hand, that the cross of the royal and military order of Saint Louis has ever been regarded uniquely as the proof of, and reward for, valour, and that several officers who were thus decorated, having abandoned the military career for the church or the law, continued to wear on their new garments this honourable evidence that they had worthily performed their duties in a calling fraught with greater dangers; I do not think that there can be any objection to a like indulgence being granted to a valorous maiden who, having been brought up in male attire by her parents, and having courageously fulfilled all the perilous duties imposed by the profession of arms, may not have been aware of the impropriety of adopting the attire in which she had been compelled to live, until it became too late to change, and is therefore not in the least to blame for not having done so until now.

'Considering, also, that the rare example offered by this extraordinary maiden is not likely to be followed by those of her sex, and can have no consequences; that had Jeanne d'Arc, who saved the throne and the states of Charles VII., fighting in male attire, obtained during the war, as has the said Demoiselle D'Eon de Beaumont, some military reward or decoration such as the cross of Saint Louis; it does not appear that, her task being completed, the King would have deprived her of the honourable

guerdon for valour when requiring her to resume the garments of her sex, nor that any chivalrous French knight would have considered the distinction as being profaned, because it ornamented the breast and dress of a female who, on the field of battle, had ever shown herself worthy of being a man.

‘I therefore venture to take it upon myself, not in the quality of envoy, lest I should abuse the power confided to me, but as a man persuaded of the rectitude of the principles I have just enunciated; I take it upon myself, I say, to leave with the Demoiselle Charles, &c. D'Eon de Beaumont the cross of Saint Louis, and liberty to wear it on her female attire, without, however, its being understood that I bind his Majesty to this act should he disapprove my conduct on this point; promising only, in the event of any difficulty arising, that I will plead with his Majesty in her behalf, and, if necessary, establish her right thereto, which I believe to be legitimate, with all the power of my pen and the strength of my heart.

‘With regard to the request made by the said Demoiselle D'Eon de Beaumont to the King, for a sum of money to enable her to procure a female outfit—although such a matter is not included in my instructions, I will not delay taking it into consideration, such an outlay being, as a fact, the necessary consequence of the instructions of which I am the bearer, to the effect that she is to assume the garments of her sex. I therefore allow her, for the purchase of a female outfit, a sum of 2,000 crowns, on condition that she will not bring away with her from London any of her clothing, arms, or any male apparel, lest the desire to wear them should at any time be stimulated by the sight of them. I consent to her retaining one complete suit of uniform of the regiment in which she has served, the helmet, sabre, pistols, musket and bayonet, as souvenirs of her past life, just as are preserved the relics of loved ones now no more. Everything else will be given up to me in London, to be sold, the proceeds to be disposed of in such way as his Majesty may direct.

‘And this act has been made out in duplicate, between us, Pierre-Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais, and Charles-Geneviève-Louise-Augusta-André-Timothée D'Eon de Beaumont, under private seal, giving to it, on one side and the other, the most

complete force and assent, and we have, each of us, affixed the seals of our arms, in London, the fifth day of October, 1775.<sup>1</sup>

(Signed) 'CARON DE BEAUMARCHAIS.  
'D'EON DE BEAUMONT.'

When the wording of this Covenant had been first agreed upon, Beaumarchais went to Staunton Harold, paid a large portion of the sum presumably owing to Lord Ferrers, then left for France, returning almost immediately, bringing with him three warrants the production of which was indispensable to the signing of the Covenant no longer delayed, and effected on November 4. Those warrants, all bearing the same date, we reproduce in full—the first confers on Beaumarchais full powers to negotiate with D'Eon for the surrender of the official and secret correspondence of Louis XV.—the second grants permission to D'Eon to return to France—the third requires the Demoiselle D'Eon to reassume female attire, the right to wear the cross of Saint Louis being at the same time conceded to her.

## I.

### IN THE KING'S NAME.

'His Majesty being informed that there are in the possession of the Sieur D'Eon de Beaumont sundry papers relating to secret negotiations and correspondence with the late King, his most honoured grandfather, and with some of his Ministers of State, and it being his Majesty's desire that these papers should be withdrawn, he has to this end empowered and commissioned

<sup>1</sup> 'This Covenant was not actually signed until November 4, after the return of Beaumarchais, who had brought from Paris the instruments of his authority. But M. D'Eon having been born on October 5, 1728, and as the said Covenant endowed him with an existence conformable to his sex, M. de Beaumarchais wished to pay Mademoiselle D'Eon the compliment of dating this document, which was to her a sort of new baptismal certificate, with the same date as that of her birth.'—Note by D'Eon.

by these presents the Sieur Pierre-Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais to proceed to London, there to discover all the documents in question, to withdraw them out of the hands or custody of whoever may have them, to take charge of them, to bring them to France, and to deliver them for his Majesty. His Majesty authorises the Sieur Caron de Beaumarchais to make all such arrangements and dispositions as he may deem necessary, with the view of enforcing all the conditions that prudence will suggest, for the complete execution of the commission confided to him, his Majesty being pleased to trust to his intelligence and zeal in this matter. And as assurance of his will, his Majesty has of his own hand signed the present order, which he has caused to be countersigned by me, Councillor, Secretary of State for his commands and finance.



‘LOUIS.  
(Signed)

‘GRAVIER DE VERGENNES.’

‘At Versailles, August 25, 1775.’

To a certified copy of the above warrant was appended the following affirmation:—

‘And upon the 4th day of November, 1775, all minutes and the original ministerial correspondence during the embassy of the Duke de Nivernois, and during the ministry of the Chevalier D'Eon; the despatches, letters, memorandums, notes and instructions of the Dukes de Choiseul and de Praslin, and of the Ministers of the English Court, as well as the minutes of the correspondence between the Chevalier D'Eon and the King, Louis XV., from 1762 to 1774, have been faithfully delivered to me.’

‘CARON DE BEAUMARCHAIS.’

## II.

### IN THE KING'S NAME.

‘His Majesty having been pleased to cause information to be laid before him of the different commissions, both public and private, which the late King, his most honoured grandfather,

<sup>1</sup> Gaill. 399.



heretofore most graciously confided for his service, as well in Russia as in England and other places, to Charles-Geneviève-Louise-Auguste-André-Timothée D'Eon de Beaumont, and of the manner in which he executed them, as also of the said D'Eon de Beaumont's military service, his Majesty was convinced that, as an officer and as a minister, in politics, in war, and upon every occasion, he has given such indisputable proofs of attachment to his country, and of zeal for the King's service, as render him worthy of the protection which his Majesty is pleased to grant him; and his said Majesty, willing that the said D'Eon de Beaumont should partake of his royal favour, deigns to continue the pension of twelve thousand livres pe annum, which the late King, his grandfather, granted to him in 1766, and which has been paid to him to this day without interruption. His Majesty, moreover, being willing that the unhappy quarrels which broke out so publicly, to the scandal of Europe, should be for ever buried in oblivion, imposes absolute silence for the future in that respect, not only upon the said D'Eon de Beaumont, but also upon all his officers and subjects; upon this condition his Majesty grants permission to the said D'Eon de Beaumont to return into his kingdom, to remain there, and to attend to his affairs in full liberty, as also to choose any other country which he shall think proper, according to the choice given him by the late King, dated April 1, 1766. His Majesty, moreover, willing that, upon no occasion, at no time, and in no place whatever, the said D'Eon shall be troubled, disquieted, or molested in his honour, his person, or his fortune, by any of the ministers—past, present, or future, or by any other person, either about the negotiations or commissions, whether public or secret, with which the late King had honoured him, or from any other cause resulting from his quarrels, disputes, and law-suits, which by these presents are for ever abolished, as hath been said above; is pleased to grant to the said D'Eon de Beaumont safeguard and entire security for his person, and to put him under his said Majesty's special and immediate protection and safeguard, charging the said D'Eon de Beaumont to observe the strictest silence, and to demean himself upon all occasions like a submissive, respectful, and faithful subject; and as an assurance of the authenticity of his royal will in this respect, his

Majesty has signed this order and safeguard with his own hand ; and in order to prevent all persons from pretending ignorance, hath caused it to be countersigned and delivered to the said D'Eon de Beaumont by me, Councillor, and Secretary of State for his Foreign Affairs, and for his commands and finances.<sup>1</sup>



‘ (Signed)

‘ LOUIS.

‘ GRAVIER DE VERGENNES.’

‘ At Versailles, the 25th day of August, 1755.’

### III.

#### IN THE KING'S NAME.

‘ Demoiselle Charles - Geneviève - Louise - Auguste - André-Timothée D'Eon de Beaumont, spinster of age, hitherto known as the Chevalier D'Eon, formerly captain of dragoons, knight of the royal and military order of Saint Louis, and minister plenipotentiary in England, &c., is hereby required to resume immediately the garments of her sex, never again to lay them aside, and she is forbidden, under pain of disobedience, to reappear in France otherwise than in female attire. Upon this condition only, and others fully set forth in the special safe-conduct which we have this day granted to her, she may, in perfect security on my royal word, return to her own country, there to enjoy the freedom, the honours, favours, and benefits that have been accorded to her by our illustrious and most honoured grandfather, as well as by ourselves, in consideration of her military and political services, without any fear of molestation to her person, honour, and property by any of my late, present, or future ministers, or by any other person of whatsoever rank or quality. And his Majesty, desiring to mark by special favour his sense of the public and secret services, in war and in diplomacy, which the said Demoiselle D'Eon de

<sup>1</sup> From a leaflet printed in English and French for circulation by D'Eon, who added : ‘ N.B.—This judgment given by the King himself serves to authenticate the justice of Chevalier D'Eon's cause, and ought not to leave him a single enemy under the reign of Louis XVI., when the choice of ministers seems to characterise the monarch's virtues, and to proclaim that the brave and virtuous citizen is assured of a protector.’

Beaumont has had the good fortune to render during upwards of twenty consecutive years to the late King, his most honoured grandfather, decrees that the cross of his royal and military order of Saint Louis, won by the said Demoiselle D'Eon de Beaumont at the peril of her life, in combats, sieges, and battles in which she took part, when she was wounded and employed as aide-de-camp to the general, also as captain of dragoons and of volunteers in the army of de Broglie, with bravery to which all the generals under whom she has served have attested, shall never be taken from her, and that the right to wear it in female attire shall belong to her until death.<sup>1</sup> And as an assurance of the authenticity of his will in this respect, his Majesty has of his own hand signed the present order ; and to prevent all persons from pretending ignorance, hath caused it to be countersigned and delivered to the said Demoiselle D'Eon de Beaumont by me, Councillor, Secretary of State for his Foreign Affairs, and for his commands and finances.<sup>2</sup>



‘ LOUIS.

‘ (Signed)

‘ GRAVIER DE VERGENNES.’

‘ At Versailles, the 25th day of August, 1775.’

<sup>1</sup> One English and ten French ladies are decorated with the cross of the Legion of Honour at the present time.

<sup>2</sup> Gaill. 402.

## CHAPTER XV.

Revival of gambling policies on D'Eon's sex—Renewed protests—Admits being a female to the Count de Broglio—Beaumarchais a hard master—He demands final instructions from the King—Differences of opinion and angry interchange of letters.

D'Eon's burning desire to see his beloved France was at length about to be gratified, and as these fresh news got bruited about, the press announced that the Chevalier had been recalled, it being the King's intention to load *him* (or *her*) with honours, and that the heroine would be shortly leaving for her native land, where the French Court was impatient to see her. Such rumours only served to revive all the old squabbles over the policies on his sex, and bets ran seven to four that D'Eon was a woman and not a man,<sup>1</sup> which, though fairly heavy odds, showed that there still existed a pretty strong feeling in favour of his being a man rather than a woman. He again became the subject of numerous objectionable proposals, advances he repelled with infinite disgust, and which he did his best to discountenance and discourage by a protest to which he gave the greatest possible publicity.

‘The Chevalier D'Eon desires, with most earnest entreaty, the people of England, who hitherto have testified their benevolence towards him, and have taken so great a part in his misfortunes, not to renew any policies on his sex, since the desire

<sup>1</sup> *Morning Post and Daily Advertiser*, &c., November 10—11, 1775.

to discountenance those that were made in 1771 has been the principal cause of his remaining four years longer in England than intended. He is convinced that there are amongst the great in France some that abuse the perfect knowledge they have of his sex, so as to engage certain bankers in Paris to correspond with certain bankers in London. Some of those great men have a design, perhaps, to hurt his peace by what remains of their impotent revenge, and think the people of England would thereby become accomplices in their malice. The Chevalier D'Eon cannot believe it, but, whatever are the grounds for fresh reports, the Chevalier D'Eon publicly declares, as in justice he ought, that he has recently refused great sums of money which have been offered to him to be concerned in such policies ; offers that he could never hear of but with the most sovereign contempt. He declares that he will never manifest his sex till such time as all policies shall be at an end. If that is impossible, the Chevalier D'Eon will be forced to quit secretly a country which he deems second to his own, as it has proved a bulwark against the persecution of his malicious enemies ; and this act would be so much the more painful, as his Sovereign (who is as equitable as he is benevolent) has just rendered to him a most signal act of justice, which will soon be made public, as will his condition and extraordinary situation with respect to the late King, a situation unknown to this day to all the ministers and ambassadors, and to the public. If after a desire and declaration so formal, that same public will continue to deceive itself, they are entirely at liberty to do as they please.<sup>1</sup>

‘THE CHEVALIER D'EON.’

‘London, November 11, 1775,

‘32 Brewer Street, Golden Square.’

In less than a month after the appearance of this address, by which it might be inferred that if D'Eon was anything at all he was more probably a man than a woman, his old chief and firmest of friends, the Count de Broglio, received his humble confession that he was

<sup>1</sup> *Morning Post and Daily Advertiser, &c.*, November 13—14, 1775. *The Morning Post*, established in 1772, was already having a large circulation.

not a man but a woman—a confession that could only have been to one of the count's discernment and sensibility but transparent veneer over the sarcasm the letter was intended to convey.

'It is time to undeceive you. For a captain of dragoons, and aide-de-camp in war and politics, you have had but the semblance of a man. I am only a maiden who would have perfectly well sustained my part until death, had not politics and your enemies rendered me the most unfortunate of women. . . . You will admit, by the facility with which I separate myself from the world, that I remained in it for your sake only; and since I can no longer work or fight under your orders and under those of the marshal, your brother, I will renounce without any pain this deceitful world, which, however, has never deluded me, except in my youth so sorrowfully spent. I no longer believe it possible to die of grief, since I have the strength to endure so much. I know not how long I shall be able to sustain this cruel shock, as I have been confined to my bed through illness for the last twelvemonth.

'I am respectfully, Monsieur le Comte, your most humble and most obedient servant (*serviteur*),

'GENEVÈVE-LOUISE-AUGUSTE D'EON DE BEAUMONT.'

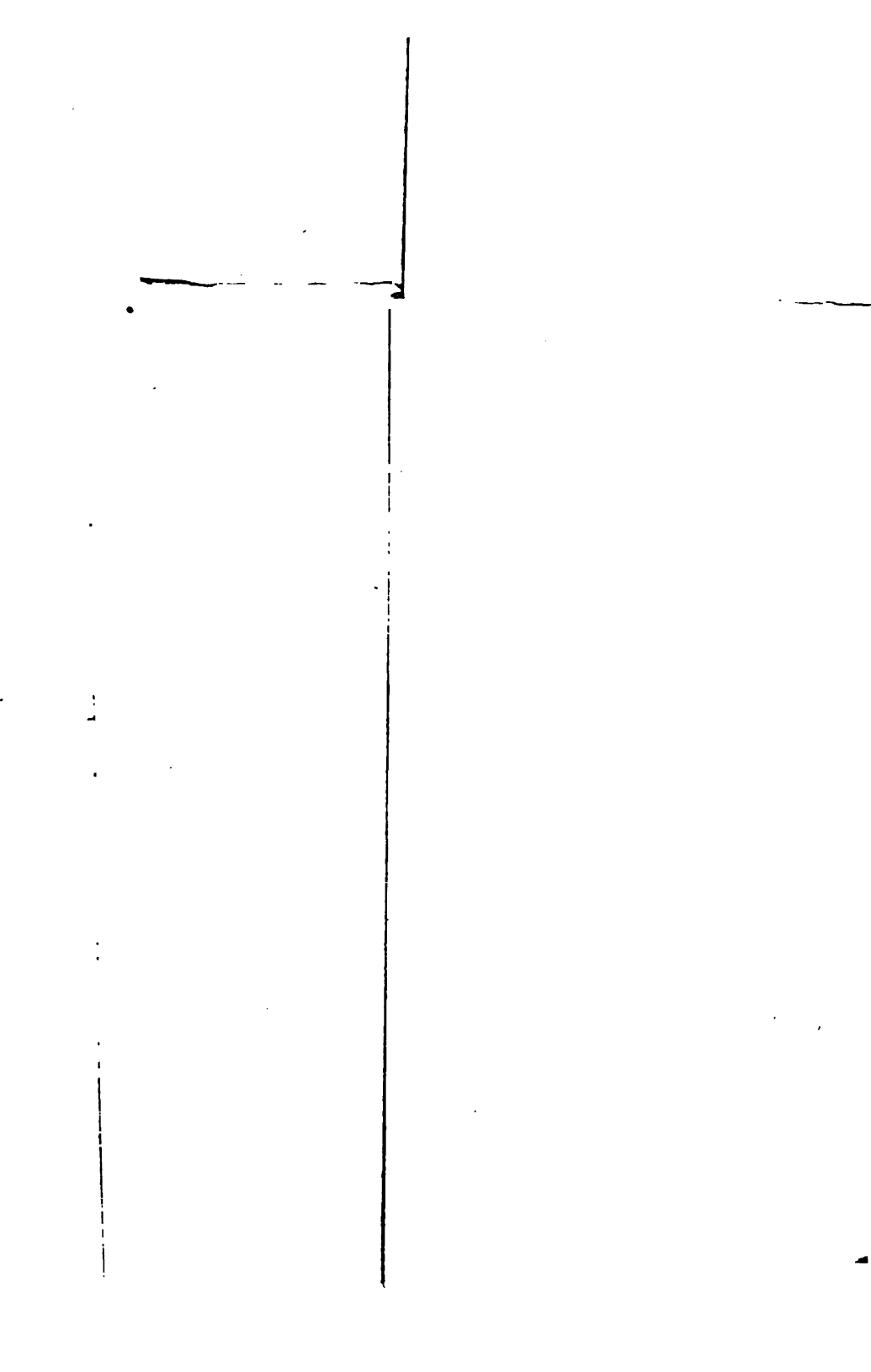
'London, December 5, 1775.'

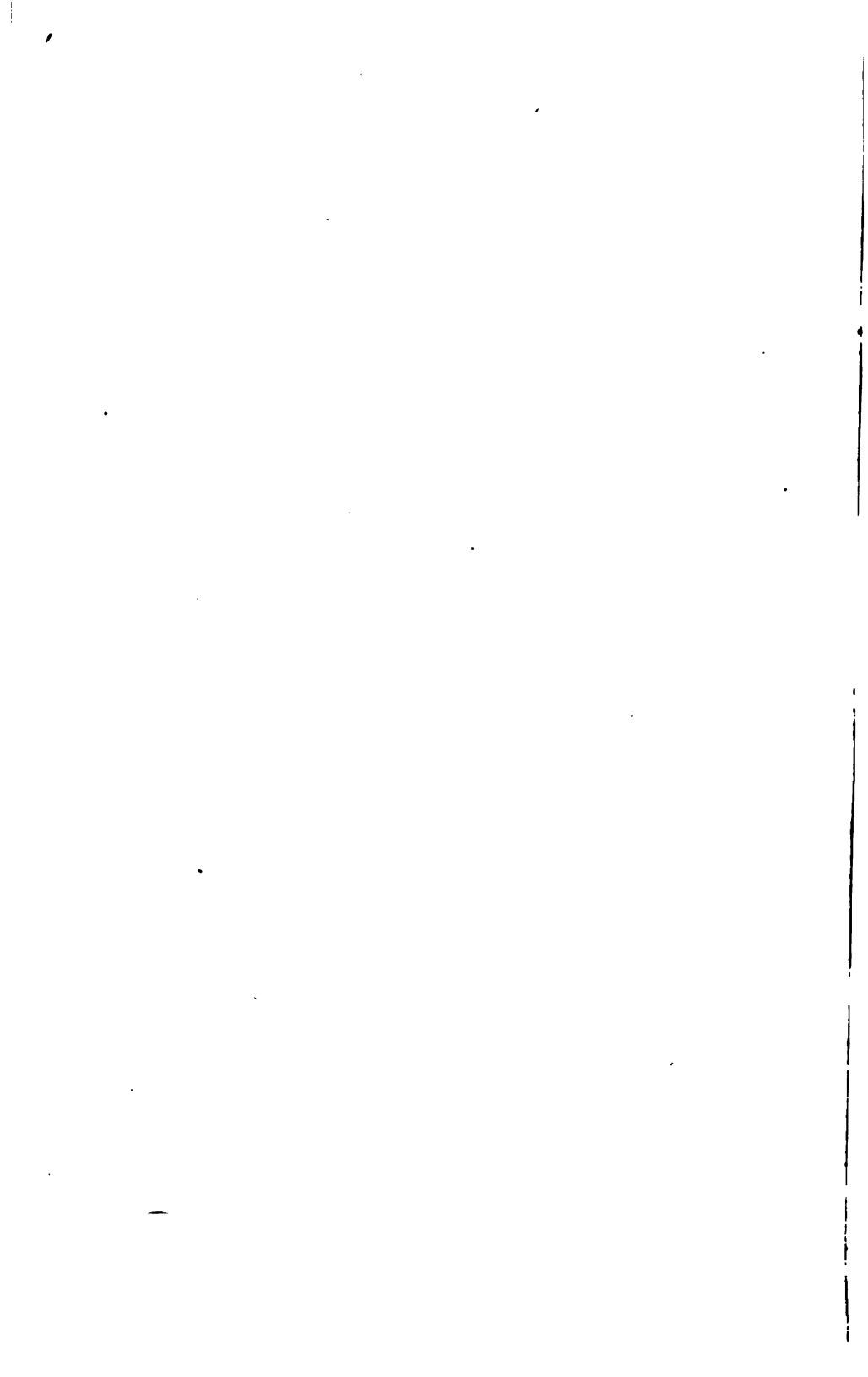
'P.S.—You seemed to be astonished, Monsieur le Comte, at M. de Beaumarchais having meddled in my affairs; but you will cease to be so when you know that this has been the will of the King and of the Count de Vergennes, and that I had been enjoined not to write to anybody upon the arrangement of my affairs until all was settled. Everything soon will be, and very differently to the extraordinary propositions made by the Marquis de Prunevaux.'<sup>1</sup>

This was the last letter of any consequence addressed by D'Eon to the Count de Broglio,<sup>2</sup> who gave little en-

<sup>1</sup> Gaill. 249.

<sup>2</sup> The Count de Broglio remained passive. 'He is not a genius of the first water, but lively, and sometimes agreeable,' said Walpole, who met the count in Paris, to the Hon. H. S. Conway.







couragement to his correspondent of many years' standing, if we except one written in 1778, and which will be touched upon in its proper place.

Although the Covenant between Beaumarchais and D'Eon had been formally signed, there still remained certain conditional clauses to be ratified. Beaumarchais informed the Count de Vergennes that he had assured the lady with whom he was in treaty, that if she were wise, discreet, silent, and well conducted, he should give so good an account of her to the King's minister, and even to his Majesty himself, as to lead to the hope that he should succeed in obtaining for her other benefits. He did not hesitate to hold out such a promise, having a balance on hand of 41,000 livres tournois, with which he purposed rewarding each submission she made, by supposed concessions on the part of the King and of his minister; only, however, as favours that were being granted, and not in satisfaction of any claim. It was by such artifice only that he could expect to prevail, and subdue the unruly and crafty creature. The triumph of Beaumarchais was complete, for D'Eon, even in spite of himself, was effectively within his grip; and he who had spent a lifetime in the direction of affairs, and whose ambition and restlessness would never brook interposition, became at length persuaded that his only chance in life—and yet at what a fearful sacrifice—lay in meekly submitting to the only man who had ever succeeded, being favoured by the most exceptional circumstances, in daunting his rebellious spirit.

Beaumarchais again left London, taking with him upon this occasion his prize, the iron safe, which he delivered into the custody of de Vergennes, tendering at the same time to that minister a series of questions for the

consideration of the King, who was entreated to insert replies in his own hand, that he might be armed with further incontestable authority for bringing his transactions with D'Eon to a speedy termination. The text of the original, which is preserved, was written by Beaumarchais himself and bears his signature, 'the replies to each question, on the margin, being in a small, tremulous, and undecided hand, in which the letters *t* and *v* are scarcely indicated—it is the writing of the good, weak, and unhappy monarch. . . .'

There were other questions to which Beaumarchais sought for answer, but as they are in connection with his enterprises in the American cause, and entirely irrelevant to our story, we pass them over.

'Essential points which I entreat the Count de Vergennes to submit for the decision of the King, previous to my departure for London, this 13th day of December, 1775. The replies to be inserted in the margin :—

'Does the King grant permission to the Demoiselle D'Eon to wear the cross of Saint Louis in female attire ?

*In the  
pro-  
vinces  
only.*

'Does his Majesty approve of the gift of 2,000 crowns which I have placed to the credit of that lady for her female outfit ?

*Yes.*

'If in the affirmative, does his Majesty leave to her disposal the whole of her male garments ?

*She must  
sell  
them.*

'As the granting of these favours must depend upon a certain frame of mind I would impose for ever on the Demoiselle D'Eon, will his Majesty be pleased to leave me at liberty to concede or refuse them, as I may deem most desirable to the interests of his service ?

*Yes.*

'Since the King cannot refuse to direct his Minister for Foreign Affairs to furnish me with a receipt for all the papers I have brought to him from England, I have requested the Count de Vergennes to entreat his Majesty to have the goodness to add at the foot of the said

receipt a few words *in his own hand*, expressive of his satisfaction at the manner in which I have accomplished my mission. This reward, the dearest to my heart, may some day prove of the greatest service to me. Should some powerful enemy at any time hereafter call upon me to render an account of my conduct in this affair, I should, with one hand, show him the King's order, and with the other tender the certificate of my master, testifying that I executed his orders to his satisfaction. All extraneous interference would in such a case be futile, and people will be at liberty to say what they please, without my being called upon to offer any explanation or being in the least degree concerned.'

*Good.*

In countersigning this document, de Vergennes added: 'The marginal replies are in the King's own hand,' and Beaumarchais was granted a certificate to the effect that 'the King was entirely satisfied with the zeal he had exhibited on this occasion, and with the intelligence and skill displayed in accomplishing the mission entrusted to him.'<sup>1</sup> With these precious papers Beaumarchais took flight for the English capital, where he arrived on December 29.

D'Eon's action in rushing into print during the absence of Beaumarchais, was scarcely in accordance with the stipulations of the latter that she should preserve a discreet and silent demeanour, and he told her so. In justification, D'Eon said he should never have thought of having recourse to the press had not several persons, he knew well, been at some pains to revive the policies on his sex. Leaving his chair abruptly, and putting on his hat in a passion, Beaumarchais qualified the notice she had inserted in the 'Morning Post' as a badly-worded, stupid, senseless, and impertinent production from, beginning to end—to which sentiment

<sup>1</sup> Loménie, i. 428, 518.

D'Eon responded by also rising and putting on his hat, and terminating the interview by saying that the negotiations and such negotiators as he was, might go to the d——! The next morning he hired a post-chaise, and leaving Beaumarchais to his own devices, went to Lord Ferrers' seat in Leicestershire, where we shall find him for the next two months.

D'Eon had hardly left the room than Beaumarchais felt that he had gone too far, and hastened to make some friendly advances. He was greatly affected, he wrote, at the exhibition of feminine choler on her part, and at the masculine terms of the compliment she had paid him. He reminded her that she had always found him agreeable and cheerful, straightforward and liberal in his dealings—and having said so much by way of apology, he awaited with curiosity any explanations she might have to offer. None came, and at the expiration of another week Beaumarchais again wrote, to say that in whatever part of England she might be, she had had ample time to answer his letter, and since she had not done so, he concluded they were in future to consider themselves strangers to each other. He was too gallant to differ with her on such a point! But she should not fail to remember how greatly she was indebted to him for the many favours the King had granted, and she was to beware lest she conducted herself with ingratitude towards the King, as she had done towards himself. To Lord Ferrers he also wrote, requesting his lordship to supply him with a receipt in full for the money he had paid him,<sup>1</sup> a request, he said, he had intended to

<sup>1</sup> The Chevalier's debt to Lord Ferrers was represented as amounting to 5,333*l.* minus interest, &c. Beaumarchais paid the earl about 5,000*l.*, and gave a bill for the balance, which, however, he failed to meet. D'Eon stated his liabilities to be 13,933*l.*

prefer through M. D'Eon, but who suddenly disappeared out of his sight without leaving word as to whither she had gone—and this, simply because he had reproved her, as a matter of necessity, for certain indiscretions committed during his, Beaumarchais', absence.

Lord Ferrers replied—and we would draw attention, for future reference, to that part of his letter we have italicised:—

'I can only say that M. D'Eon arrived at Staunton on the 2nd, feeling very unwell, and he is so still. . . . I do not find that he has behaved ungratefully towards you, but I find that he has not sufficient money to pay *what he owes me*. He has told me of some differences of opinion with you in regard to an article that has appeared in the papers, on the policies made as to his sex, which, I hope, will not lead to any rupture between you.'

The surrender of the precious deposit which had constituted his strength over the space of many years, and emboldened him in his seeming insubordination and fearless demeanour towards the ministers of France, had brought the affairs of D'Eon to a crisis, where the making or unmaking of him for the remainder of his days depended almost entirely upon submission to the man into whose hands was committed his destiny, and in whom he himself pretended to confide. The Chevalier's meekness whilst settling terms with Beaumarchais was, it might be supposed, an exemplification of the moral derived from La Fontaine's fable—

'Patience et longueur de temps  
Font plus que force ni que rage.'

But D'Eon's submission was a sham, for his mind was racked with positive pain—suffering which grew in intensity the more completely he realised the wretchedness of his situation. He had allowed himself to be

persuaded to admit that he belonged to the female sex, and to pledge himself to the assumption, for life, of female attire; irrevocable facts, under pain of forfeiting the only means of existence left to him! Yet there remained matters touching his honour in which he knew he should never be able to vindicate himself, from the moment it became publicly established that the Chevalier D'Eon was no longer a man; because it would be impossible for him, being a woman, to take the law into his own hands as was his wont in certain cases. Whether he were a male or a female, the King cared little enough, but the Chevalier was to be put into petticoats by his orders, that the scandal in which a late French ambassador in London had figured so objectionably, should never by any possibility be revived. Beaumarchais had stated what was perfectly true—D'Eon's blood boiled at the bare mention of the name of Guerchy—while the vehement longing of the young count to avenge his father had never been gratified, and his tongue had not ceased openly to slander the enemy he would chastise. D'Eon had so far failed also in disabusing the public mind generally of the imputation of his being concerned in the gambling policies on his sex, and had not succeeded in lifting himself above the cloud that tarnished his reputation and saddened his days. Moreover, in charging him with having failed to render certain papers which were found to be missing, upon the verification of the inventories at Versailles, Beaumarchais had exercised his authority oppressively and offensively. D'Eon would have called him to account for this, after an unmistakably manly fashion—but he bethought himself, as being more to his advantage, of allowing that he still held some of the secret correspondence,<sup>1</sup> hoping against hope

<sup>1</sup> It is certain that D'Eon did not deliver every paper of importance.

that he might yet prevail upon the pitiless King's agent to yield to other demands, for which he thought he had a right to press. Nevertheless, he did inflict upon him a *gentle* kind of punishment in the shape of a sorrowful despatch, consisting of no less than thirty-eight pages—the first of a series that was maintained well into the year 1778.

‘Staunton Harold, Leicestershire, January 7, 1776.

‘. . . You will allow me to tell you that the tone of despotism you have assumed since we signed our preliminary contract, and since your return from Paris, is exceedingly revolting to me, and causes you to be as intractable as was Mr. Pitt in 1761, during the negotiations for peace. . . You know how sensitive I am, and you are losing your time and your pains in seeking to alter my views on a matter that solely concerns my scruples on personal honour. I am determined that upon no account, and not for any money in the world, shall it be possible for people to believe I am interested in the infamous policies on my sex. . . . I cannot depart from the principles of honour I have traced out for myself, and of which I told you before you left for Paris. . . . It is possible that the wits and financiers of Paris ridicule my article in the “Morning Post” of November 13, and that they think my peculiar situation affords them the opportunity for robbing the English. I will never consent to anything of the sort, even should all France blame me. . . . I prefer being taken for a stupid and senseless creature, rather than for a thief and knave. . . . If what I say is right, I am justified; if not, my error must be my excuse. . . . I am staying with Lord Ferrers, who has invited me for a month past to come here and recruit . . . but I have also several affairs to settle with his lordship. . . . I purpose taking advantage of my being in the country to lay open to you my heart, and address you with all the sensitiveness of Mademoiselle de Beaumont, and the frankness of the Chevalier D'Eon. I will begin by making some observations on

Having dined with M. Hirsinger, French Chargé d’Affaires, on February 1, 1792, she consigned to that minister ‘a *valise* containing papers of the Court and King.’—*Journal for 1792*. D'Eon MSS. B.M.

the contents of your letter . . . ;' and here the Chevalière plied with the essence of flattery the man she had already so successfully cajoled: 'I can truly swear that in the whole course of my life I have never come across a more cheerful, better informed, and more agreeable man in society than M. de Beaumarchais. As to your generosity in matters of business, if by this you mean the favourable reports you were good enough to make of me to the young monarch and to his worthy minister; if you allude to the lofty, energetic, pleasing, striking, and creditable composition of our preliminary agreement of October 5, I admit with pleasure, although with the pain, the shame, and the tears that the avowal and admission of my own weakness have wrung from me, that you alone were capable of producing such a document . . . but if you mean generosity in money matters, as the term you employ would seem to imply, I confess to you my dear, my very dear Beaumarchais, that with the exception of the Duke de Praslin and his friend the late Count de Guerchy, I have never found any person more tenacious of money than yourself. . . . You will no doubt say that you have had the generosity to promise in the King's name, but on your own responsibility, the sum of 2,000 crowns, equal to 250 guineas, for my female outfit, and you thereby give yourself credit for extraordinary generosity! My reply is—It is not I who have sought this metamorphosis; it was the late King and the Duke d'Aiguillon, it is the young King and the Count de Vergennes, it is you yourself in virtue of your powers, it is the family of Guerchy which trembles at all that remains to me from my baptism—the title of man, &c. &c. Let the diplomatic appointment from which I was unjustly removed before the eyes of all Europe be restored to me; let me follow my military career; I ask for nothing else, and shall be content. I shall feel in greater safety clad as a dragoon, than in petticoats, for I should not be subjected to that kind of conversation to which women are generally entertained. . . . This malady is not of my making, and my past life bears witness that I am more worthy of wearing a helmet than a cap, and of dying on the field of battle than on a feather-bed in a nunnery. It appears that fate is continually making sport of me, and my resignation to its cruel decrees, more grievous to me than death itself, is the most complete proof of



my devotion and entire obedience to the orders of the King. . . . I hope that so just a King will give heed to me in so extraordinary a case. . . . I cannot forgive the generous Beaumarchais, who knows that I have often despised my sex, fortune, and death in the pursuit of glory; no, I cannot forgive the generous Beaumarchais, who knows how I have, upon six occasions, flown from one end of the world to the other, travelling night and day to hasten, in 1755 and 1756, the reunion of France and Russia, and arrange for the marching of one hundred thousand Muscovites against the common enemy; and that by secret orders from my master, unknown to the great Choiseul, I caused the last war to be prolonged by three years, and that I then toiled, day and night, towards the conclusion of peace. . . . Alas! had it not been for the insurmountable timidity of my late good master, Louis XV., so fatal to my welfare, which kept him from openly avowing me, whilst ever supporting me in secret . . . he would have given me two or three times the amount, for the outfit of a female such as I am, with whose history he had been acquainted from his accession to the throne; a maiden whose conduct has been irreproachable at all times and in all places, in town or country, in the north or in the south, on the field or in the cabinet of princes, of ministers, and of ambassadors; a maiden who never tickled the ears of her King but with her pen, or his enemies but with her sword! . . . I think that this good King would have been a hundred times more liberal than the generous Beaumarchais, towards a person who has been girl, man, woman, soldier, diplomatist, secretary, minister, author—according to the exigencies of the public or secret service of his master. . . . If through pure obedience to the orders of the King, I condemn myself to life in a cloister with companions in adversity, I too clearly foresee that I am likely to repent and be unhappy; but it is apparently the will of Providence, and I am left without means of escape!’

After charging Beaumarchais with failing to carry out Article IV. of their Covenant, inasmuch as a portion only of her debts had been paid and not the whole, the Chevalière points out that for the purpose of legalising the document to which they had affixed

their signatures, it was essential that the sentence of outlawry passed upon herself, in default, for the publication of the volume entitled 'Lettres, Mémoires,' &c., should be rescinded, and that Beaumarchais should be relieved from the ban of censure pronounced by the Parliament of Paris, the deprivation of civil rights under which they were suffering rendering null and void any and all their acts.

'I have but one other request to make,' she continued; 'I beg that the son of the Count de Guerchy will explain himself clearly and honestly, through you, as I am about to do. I am aware that, accompanied by his mother and by the Duke de Nivernois, he called on the Counts de Maurepas and de Vergennes, to give those ministers to understand that he felt bound in honour to fight me; that those two ministers were good enough to tranquillise Madame de Guerchy by saying that they believed her son to be too just and honourable a man to draw his sword upon a woman, whereupon she withdrew expressing her thanks and greatly comforted. I now wish to give you my true and unchangeable opinion on this matter. I have always respected the birth, the qualities, and the virtues of the Countess de Guerchy. Her son was so young at the time of my differences with his father, that, far from wishing to hurt that dear and only son, I should save his life were it in danger, and in my power to do so. I will never think of attacking him, but I will defend myself at any moment that he may be the aggressor. Nothing can be more just or natural than that the son should take to heart the defence of his father; therefore, that he may feel perfectly easy—should he think that he is in honour bound to vindicate the wickedness and the crimes of the late Count de Guerchy, by resorting to arms, I give him my word of honour that I shall have the pleasure of fighting him whenever he pleases, provided he comes to England, the theatre of the scenes of horror acted to my prejudice, and the best field in Europe for such a proceeding, for you must perfectly well understand that to meet in France, or elsewhere than in my island, would be a delusion and a snare. . . . I further give

him my word of honour not to lay aside my uniform, and will never, from lack of courage, look for protection in the dress of my sex. . . . I await, through you, a categorical answer, from him, upon a matter of such importance to myself. Through life I have been as touchy on the subject of military honour, as should be a maiden on her chastity. . . .’

Referring to the intemperate language Beaumarchais had employed with regard to the notice in the daily papers:—

‘Nobody has ever dared to speak to me in such terms. I hope it will be the last time, unless you are inclined to fight me before young de Guerchy makes his appearance. . . .’ Then warming up amorously—‘it would be a fearful blow to my feelings to have to fight the one I love best, to confront him who calls himself my deliverer, and this deliverer would never think of fighting his little *dragonne*, however redoubtable she may be in her uniform. . . . I repeat to you what Rosina is made to say in your “Barber of Seville”—“You are made to be loved. . . .” Such contrasts in an irritable disposition, which, in spite of me, exists in me and is precisely that of my mother and sister, will no doubt provide material to such a philosopher as yourself, for a thousand reflections on the unintelligible character of women. Attribute everything to our hysterics and weaknesses. *Quid levius fumo? Flamen. Quid flamine? Ventus. Quid vento? Mulier. Quid muliere? Nihil. . . .’*

Beaumarchais reminded Mademoiselle D’Eon, in his reply to this interminable composition so full of re-priminations, of his ceaseless efforts in her behalf to obtain advantageous concessions from the King—he called her to a sense of her duty, and allowed her eight days to express her regret at what she had written. He bitterly reproached her for allowing that she had not given up the whole of the King’s papers, since she had signed a declaration to that effect. Confiding in her good faith, which, however, had proved bad, he

had given the deed for a life-annuity of 12,000 livres, paid 128,000 livres in liquidation of her debts, and supplied her with the safe-conduct. . . .

‘Far from placing to the King’s account the 120,000 livres I have so foolishly handed over, I must acknowledge my culpable excess of confidence, and as a matter of course reimburse his Majesty, unless I avail myself of your situation. This I shall be able to do by means of the very service I have rendered to you, in causing a precarious pension to be converted into a bond that is now absolutely your private property. This beneficial change having freed you from dependence on ministers, places you, as are all investors in this kingdom, in dependence on the law and its tribunals. I shall forbid the payment of dividends, and with your notes and Lord Ferrers’ receipt in hand, shall enter an action against you and claim the repayment of 120,000 livres disbursed on your account—this, or the entire observance of the terms of our Covenant. You will thus learn, to your cost, whether my acts are of weight in France. . . .’

Again a few passages from DEon’s lengthy rejoinders, also dated at Staunton Harold, and we close, for a time at least, the ill-humoured correspondence of two royal secret agents, who were simply practising towards each other *ruse contre ruse*.

‘. . . I offer no reply to your reproaches nor to your misplaced invectives. I consider them to be the effects of bad humour on the part of the cleverest and most agreeable ape I have ever met in my life. . . . I have already had the honour to inform you, that so long as Art. IV. of our Covenant, which distinctly states that you are to supply me with larger sums for the liquidation of my debts, is not executed, I do not feel bound to observe any of the terms in the transaction. You are the contracting power, I am the executrix; it is therefore for you to act and for me to execute. . . . Your reproaches on the incomplete delivery of papers are badly founded; in the first place, because neither you, nor any ministers—past, present, or future—nor the Prince de Conti, not even the Count de Broglio, can be

aware of all that passed in 1755 and 1756, of a secret nature, between the late King, the Empress Elizabeth and the Grand Chancellor of Russia, Count Woronzoff. M. Tercier, the Chevalier Douglas and I were alone engaged in this important secret negotiation, of which M. Rouillé, at that time Minister for Foreign Affairs, had not the slightest cognisance. It was only in 1757 that the Count de Broglio was partly admitted into the secret, and that he, by order of the King, associated me in his own secret correspondence. . . . I have not deceived you, because with twenty letters I have warned the Count de Broglio, the minister at Versailles and you as well, that so long as the sum to which I lay legitimate claim is not paid, I shall never make a complete surrender of my papers. . . . When you will have aged and become grey by long service in the army and diplomacy, you will have learnt that where a third-class power treats for peace with a first-class power, the third-class power always secures the guarantee of two second-class powers for the observance of the conditions. . . . Now, since I consider my power to be the weakest, and least important on earth, as compared to that with which I have the honour to treat, and that I am unable to secure the guarantee of any power, great or small, I entrust myself to my own prudence and experience. Consult all good diplomatists at Versailles or elsewhere in Europe, to find out whether I am in the wrong and as silly as you take me to be. . . . Should his Majesty and his ministers persist in the consummation of our Covenant, I will fulfil my part from a sense of obedience, but you are equally bound to concede to me my just demands. . . .<sup>1</sup>

‘LE CHEVALIER ET CHEVALIÈRE D’EON.’

The astute and yet outwitted Beaumarchais had become thoroughly persuaded that not only was the Chevalier a female, but also one of the most unmanageable of her sex. For her own part, D’Eon was now as thoroughly convinced that the end of Beaumarchais’ mission would be the consummation of all her hopes, all her desires. She still needed a good sum of money

<sup>1</sup> Gaill. 414.

for satisfying her creditors, and yet, what prospect had she of obtaining it from one whose harshness as task-master was only to be equalled by his exceeding great parsimony as purse-bearer! However stern and unflinching, Beaumarchais had seldom behaved otherwise than with consideration towards the distinguished heroine with whom he had undertaken to treat, whose past services and misfortunes had awakened in him a feeling of something more than ordinary interest, and which, through vanity, he had not the sense to dissemble. Keenly alive to all this, D'Eon was resolved to profit by the favourable impression she had made, therefore, changing her tone from bluster to gentleness, she coyly approached Beaumarchais:—

‘ . . . I own that a woman sometimes finds herself in such an unfortunate position, that the force of circumstances obliges her to avail herself of services of which she is the first to feel the absurdity, because she knows what prompts the offer of them. The more clever and attentive the man who wishes to serve her, the greater her danger. But what thoughts do not these recollections awaken? They remind me that through blind confidence in you and in your promises, I revealed to you the mystery of my sex, that in token of gratitude I gave you my portrait, and that you promised yours as a mark of your regard. There never has been any other engagement between us. All you have alleged in addition, on the subject of our approaching marriage as related to me from Paris, cannot be considered by me otherwise than as idle jesting on your part. If you thought I was in earnest in offering a token of remembrance and gratitude, your conduct is pitiful; it is contemptible and faithless, such as no Parisian would forgive, however accustomed she might be to the ways now in fashion amongst husbands; how much less a maiden with so strict a sense of virtue as is mine, and whose spirit is haughty when her integrity and tender-heartedness is assailed. Why did I not remember that men are only fit to deceive womankind! . . . So far, I only

thought of doing justice to your merits, admiring your talents and your generosity ; I no doubt already loved you—but the feeling was so novel to me, and I was a long way from believing that love could be begotten in the midst of distress and pain. . . .’

Beaumarchais had married three wives—and lost them, and was evidently a man who sought after feminine sympathy, a craving that became manifest to D'Eon, who deemed it worth her while to gratify it—and she succeeded.

‘Everybody tells me,’ he wrote to Vergennes, ‘that this insane woman is in love with me. She fancies that I have slighted her, and women never forgive an offence of that sort. I am far from slighting her, but who the d——l would ever have supposed that for the sake of serving my King zealously I should have to become the gallant knight of a captain of dragoons ? The case is so ridiculous that I find it very difficult to write seriously.’<sup>1</sup>

That marriage was contemplated became a common topic in Paris, and while none believed, few were prepared to doubt, or treat such gossip with contempt. We are able to quote from two letters in which the subject is mentioned by the writers, who had known D'Eon intimately during many years.

‘Two pieces of news to communicate, my dear Chevalier ! The first is, that I have become a widow ; the second, it is reported in Paris, and word has been written to me from London, that you wish Constance (her daughter) to be one also, you being about to marry Caron de Beaumarchais. Really, this sort of thing is never done. . . .’<sup>2</sup>

And her landlord, Mr: Lautem, in whose house she had lived almost unintermittingly since the autumn of 1763, says to her :—

<sup>1</sup> Loménie, i. 432.

<sup>2</sup> Madame de Courcelles to D'Eon, January 1, 1776. Gaill. 396.

' . . . Every letter from Paris gives us to understand that M. Beaumarchais is come to London to be married to you. My reply is that I do not consider him sufficiently handsome (*beau*). M. de Morande told me this morning that M. de Beaumarchais was about leaving, and would not be here upon your return. I told him I had not heard from you. . . .'<sup>1</sup>

So long as Beaumarchais abstained from advancing the 'other large sums' promised in Article IV. of the Covenant, so long did the Chevalière refuse to carry out her engagement to discard her uniform for female attire; a refusal adopted by the King's envoy as his motive for forbearing from taking any further interest in his refractory client. Loménie argues that it was precisely because she could not be prevailed upon to clothe herself in the garments of her sex, that no money was forthcoming; but it may fairly be contended, upon D'Eon's argument, that Beaumarchais being the contracting power, were he to prove true to his obligations, she, as executrix, would necessarily be obliged to observe her engagements under pain of being deprived of the enjoyment of her annuity. It is not easy to account for the meanness and want of generosity displayed by Beaumarchais in his dealings with the Chevalière, his penuriousness leading him even to neglect the bonds he had given to Lord Ferrers, and upon the faith of which he was allowed to have the iron safe.

Baser conduct in Beaumarchais was his participation in the interminable and ever-increasing sex policies, the Chevalière entreating him, over and over, to abstain from mixing himself up in affairs that sorely afflicted her. Thoroughly persuaded that D'Eon was of the female sex, Beaumarchais added insult to injury by

<sup>1</sup> February 3, 1776. B.M. MSS.



offering her eight thousand louis d'or and a share in all his profits, if she would submit herself to the verdict of a qualified jury nominated for the purpose by the policy-holders—proposals that were repelled with the contempt they deserved, and in the same spirit in which similar advances were repulsed in 1771, when the accommodation bribe amounted to fifteen thousand guineas. As bad was the confederacy into which Beaumarchais suffered himself to be drawn, having become associated in these foul speculations with the needy adventurer Morande; and it being the Chevalier's practice, with his *cacoëthes scribendi*, to commit to paper every circumstance, every incident, small or great, in which he chanced to be concerned, he drew up and afterwards distributed a declaration, which was to show forth how Morande and Beaumarchais had endeavoured, in defiance of him, to practise fraud in their speculations on his sex.

'We, the undersigned, Charles-Geneviève, &c. D'Eon de Beaumont, formerly captain of dragoons, &c.; François de la Chèvre, of Queen Street, Golden Square; Jacques Dupré, Esq., of New Bond Street; and Jean de Vignolles, Esq., of Warwick Street, do hereby declare on our word of honour, that being at dinner with the Chevalier D'Eon, of Brewer Street, Golden Square, on Thursday, April 11, of the current year, 1776, and being in the company of the said Chevalier D'Eon and of M. Charles Théveneau de Morande, Esq., of Duke Street, Oxford Road, whom we know to be the intimate friend and confidant of M. Caron de Beaumarchais, known to us as having been entrusted by the King of France to treat with the said Chevalier D'Eon for his return to France—the conversation turned on the revival, in November 1775, of the policies in regard to the sex of the said Chevalier D'Eon; that the said Chevalier D'Eon then declared to us that M. Caron de Beaumarchais and M. de Morande, who were present, had tried to induce him, the said Chevalier D'Eon, to associate himself with them in the traffic of these policies, representing to him that such a measure would

infallibly lead to the gain of large sums of money. The said M. de Morande having eluded giving a categorical answer, the said Chevalier D'Eon sharply called upon the said M. de Morande to declare, frankly and clearly, whether he, Charles Théveneau de Morande, had not proposed to the said Chevalier D'Eon, in October 1775, at the time that M. Caron de Beaumarchais was in this country engaged in his negotiations, that he should make common cause with him in the policies on his sex? To which M. de Morande gave an affirmative and unequivocal answer. Whereupon, the Chevalier D'Eon having said that he had too much respect for himself ever to have dreamt of participating in the infamy with which the said Caron de Beaumarchais and the said de Morande sought to cover him, inquired whether, notwithstanding his refusal, he and his friend M. de Beaumarchais had not been foolish enough to deal in the said policies on his sex—to which we heard M. de Morande reply, that such, had in reality, been his intentions; but, to avoid all risks, he had consulted several eminent English lawyers as to whether, in the event of those policies being won, the law would constrain the losers to meet their liabilities, and that a unanimous reply in the negative was alone the cause of his having abandoned the idea of making money by the said policies; and he showed a good deal of ill-humour at the persistent refusal of the Chevalier D'Eon to countenance the disreputable transactions which he, de Morande, and his confederate de Beaumarchais, contemplated, on the female sex of the said Chevalier.<sup>1</sup>

'JACQUES DUPRÉ.

'J. DE VIGNOLLES.

'DE LA CHÈVRE.

'LE CHEVALIER D'EON.'

'London, May 8, 1776.'

<sup>1</sup> *Déclaration qui prouve que les Sieurs Morande et de Beaumarchais voulaient absolument, et malgré le Chevalier D'Eon, s'établir une fortune par les polices sur son sexe.* B.M. MSS. ii. 341.

## CHAPTER XVI.

Beaumarchais' reprehensible behaviour—D'Eon challenges Morande—Miss Wilkes' curiosity—Feeling against D'Eon—Fresh difficulties with Beaumarchais—Speculators on D'Eon's sex seized with panic—Lord Mansfield's decision on the policies effected—D'Eon appears in public as a female—Leaves for France wearing military uniform—The King's second order to reassume female attire—Marie Antoinette furnishes *Mademoiselle D'Eon's* trousseau—Visits her native town—Rejoicings at her appearance—Presented at Court as a lady—The Queen's household—Deportment in society—Another trial before Lord Mansfield.

THE breach was now complete. Beaumarchais had proved himself to be perfectly indifferent in the matter of his reputation, so far as his relations with the Chevalière were concerned, and it is certain, after the admission made by Morande, that D'Eon would never have entered into further negotiations, even to her own benefit, with the man who was regardless of the injury he was causing, instead of affording his protection by virtue of the powers with which he was invested. D'Eon sent a copy of the declaration to de Vergennes, under cover of a letter, in which, after recapitulating the shameless conduct of Beaumarchais towards herself and Lord Ferrers, conduct by no means adapted to re-establish the good name of a man who had fallen a victim to the passions of the great, much less of a virtuous female, and his little scrupulousness in betraying Court secrets, she informed the minister that she declined to have further intercourse with one whose life in London, in the company of his friend Morande, was licentious and discreditable to the last degree. She

entreated the count to be persuaded that, although a female, she had all the qualities and the courage of the most fearless of men, and that notwithstanding her refusal to consent to a verification of her sex, she would be willing to do so as a favour or from necessity. This letter, written throughout in the feminine gender, is signed, 'Votre dévoué Serviteur, le Chev. D'Eon.'<sup>1</sup>

When de Vergennes had communicated to Beaumarchais its contents, so full of abuse directed against him, the latter replied with resignation: 'She is a woman, and so horribly influenced, that I forgive her with my whole heart; she is a woman, and this explains everything.'

But Beaumarchais' words were inconsistent with his actions. In the first place he had betrayed his trust in confiding to Morande the nature of his private dealings with D'Eon, together with many particulars of D'Eon's past intercourse with the Court of France, details which Morande made it his business to repeat in public, the gossip thus spread only serving to increase the agitation in the public mind on the Chevalier's sex. Then, Beaumarchais and Morandé having become thoroughly persuaded that all hope of amassing riches at the expense of Mademoiselle had vanished, and Beaumarchais being about to return to France, it was arranged that Morande should publish a pamphlet in disparagement of D'Eon, to whom a copy was sent by the writer, with the request for an interview at which terms for per-

<sup>1</sup> This, and subsequent correspondence between Beaumarchais, D'Eon, and the Count de Vergennes was published under the title:—*Pièces relatives aux démêlés entre Mademoiselle d'Eon de Beaumont, Chevalière de l'Ordre Royal et Militaire de Saint-Louis, et Ministre Plénipotentiaire de France, &c., et le Sieur Caron dit de Beaumarchais, &c.*, 1778 (12mo). B.M. MSS. ii. 341, and reproduced in de la Fortelle's latest edition (1779) of *La Vie Militaire, Politique, et Privée de Mademoiselle, &c., D'Eon de Beaumont, &c.*

manent reconciliation between them might be agreed upon. The Chevalier sent his brother-in-law O'Gorman, and his friend the Chevalier de Piennes, with a message to the effect that the only place where Mademoiselle D'Eon could meet Morande was in Hyde Park, those gentlemen being at the same time instructed to invite him to appoint an early day and the hour, and make his choice of weapons. Morande's reply was an outrage on all decency and the foulest insult that could be offered to a woman;<sup>1</sup> and when D'Eon found himself bound over to keep the peace in 200*l.*, and two sureties in 100*l.* each, he became excited beyond all control, and committed the fatal error of writing to Morande in language very similar to that employed in the pamphlet.

Morande having declined to fight a woman, O'Gorman took her place; but Morande avoided the risk of an encounter by apprising the police of the bellicose designs of the big Irishman, who was also, in his turn, bound over to keep the peace.

The widespread and unenvied notoriety that had rendered D'Eon's situation in London perfectly intolerable, was increasing in spite of himself, and his yearning to leave the country and return to France became all the greater as fresh dangers threatened the liberty of his person. He was the centre of attraction, the chief object of public curiosity, and having become more familiarly known to the multitude, was more liable to be seized at some unguarded moment, to be maltreated and insulted by those whose interests, heavily staked, demanded an expeditious solution of the problem—Of which sex is the Chevalier? One pretty and innocent little note from Miss Wilkes, daughter of the *patriot*, who had been brought up in a French convent

<sup>1</sup> *The Westminster Gazette*, August 6—10, 1776.

and knew the language perfectly, puts the question point blank.

'Miss Wilkes presents her compliments to Monsieur the Chevalier D'Eon, and is very anxious to know if he is really a woman as everybody asserts, or a man. It would be very kind of Monsieur the Chevalier D'Eon to communicate the truth to Miss Wilkes, who entreats, with all her heart, to be informed of it. It would be still more kind of him if he would come and dine with her and her papa, to-day or to-morrow, or, in fact, as soon as he is able to do so.'<sup>1</sup>

By some the Chevalier was accused of being a spy in disguise, who should be made to appear in the garments proper to her sex. By others she was suspected of being a natural daughter of Louis XV.; and one night a party of stragglers broke the windows and wrenched off several bars of the railing in front of her house in Brewer Street, violence repeated the second night after, the perpetrators not being discovered, even though D'Eon offered a reward of twenty guineas for their apprehension.<sup>2</sup> His aversion to the assumption of female attire was insurmountable, but he was pledged to it and had been strengthening his mind for the inevitable, the essential point ever present to his imagination being the driving of every bargain to his own special advantage. He sought to resume the negotiations of 1774-1775 for his return from exile, by direct communication with the Count de Vergennes, and claimed that if he were absolutely required to dress as a female, there should at least be inserted, in the written order to that effect, the words *as had been required of her in the reign of the late King*, after the words, 'to resume immediately the garments of her sex never again to lay them aside.' In making this request it

<sup>1</sup> Gaill. 196.

<sup>2</sup> *Public Ledger*, August 24, 1776.

was clearly the object of D'Eon, now about to enter upon the world's stage, openly and permanently, in the character of a female, to shield *herself* against the imputation of having of *her* own accord, and at any time disguised *her* sex to pass the life of a brave and distinguished man, and he shrank from accepting the smallest responsibility in his approaching compulsory transformation. The minister found it impossible to accede, and Beaumarchais was instructed to explain to the Chevalière the impracticability of her request being entertained, which he did, by repeating, textually, the minister's own words, after saying that he wished the Count de Vergennes had employed some person less odious than he must be to her, to communicate his reply:—

‘ . . . Can the King of France grant to a female a safe-conduct intended for an officer? Who is it that served the King? Is it Mademoiselle or M. D'Eon? If his Majesty in learning, but too late, the offences committed by her parents to the prejudice of good manners and against the laws, is desirous of forgetting the past and unwilling to impute to her the fault of having wilfully persevered in such a course—is it to be expected that the King's leniency is to extend to laying to the charge of the late King the ridicule that attaches to her indecent disguise, by employing the words she has suggested? . . . Never has the King's service required that a female should usurp the title of man, the uniform of an officer, the status of an envoy! It is in thus increasing the number of her rash claims, that this woman has succeeded in trying the King's and my own patience and the good-will of her partisans. Whether she remains in England or goes elsewhere is, as you well know, a matter of perfect indifference to us. As to her eagerness to return to France, I gave her to understand, through you, it was the King's desire that she should not do so unless in the character of her sex, and that she should here lead a quiet, virtuous, and circumspect life, such as she should never have departed from.’

Beaumarchais added, that for his own part he did

not believe, more than the minister, that any fresh claims she made could be of the least advantage to her, and with many kind words expressed his readiness to serve her as he had hitherto done, provided she did not persist in creating further difficulties.<sup>1</sup>

This refusal of Louis XVI. to accede to the request made by D'Eon, reached him at a moment that Morande had successfully defeated all his plans to punish him. Foiled in his purpose of chastising Morande by resort to arms, the Chevalier sued him for libel, and Lord Mansfield directed rule to be granted; but when it was shown that D'Eon had written equally libellous matter to Morande, the Court discharged the rule, and the Chevalier had the mortification of seeing his enemy reap the advantage of his own imprudence. It was whilst smarting under a sense of these failures that D'Eon wrote to his tormentor:—

‘I have not replied sooner to the letter you gave yourself the trouble to write, because at the time you were writing sweet things to me, you wrote to your protégé Morande in such a way as to shake the phial or rather the pitcher of venom he carries in his breast. This was neither honourable nor fair. You even urged him to write libellous matter against me in the papers.’ . . . Then in his old spirit of derision: ‘You, personally, have never been odious to me as you suppose; it was your conduct, your speech, your actions, your letters to Lord Ferrers and to myself that were odious to me. Good-night, too dear M. de Beaumarchais; it is two o’clock in the morning, I am tired and am going to bed inveighing against all those men who have treated me so badly, and above all, you yourself, who I truly esteemed and loved, and who have exasperated me beyond measure by your own and Morande’s behaviour. . . .’

In ever increasing anxiety to make his escape out of the difficulties and threatening dangers by which he was

<sup>1</sup> Beaumarchais to D'Eon, August 18, 1776. *Loménie*, i. 518.



surrounded, the Chevalier applied to the Minister for Foreign Affairs to ask whether he might rely upon the Government for protection, it being his intention to return shortly to France.

' . . . Had you not, Mademoiselle,' replied the unflinching de Vergennes, 'abandoned yourself to feelings of mistrust, which, I am persuaded, you did not maturely consider, you might have been enjoying for some time past, in your own country, that tranquillity which should now, more than ever, be the object of your desires. If you are seriously thinking of returning, the way is still open to you, and you know the conditions imposed. The most absolute reserve on the past; every precaution to be taken to avoid meeting those persons whom you regard as being the cause of your misfortunes; and, finally, the resumption of the garments of your sex. You can no longer hesitate, seeing the publicity given to this in England. You are doubtlessly aware that our laws do not tolerate such disguises. I have only to add that if, after a trial, you do not feel at home in France, there will be no objection to your proceeding elsewhere to suit your own pleasure. I have written the above in conformity with the King's orders. Let me add that the safe-conduct with which you have been supplied suffices, so that you may now do as you please. If you decide upon pursuing a wise course, I will congratulate you; otherwise, I shall only be able to pity you for not responding to the good master who offers you a helping hand. Set your mind at rest, because when in France you will be able to communicate with me directly, without the intercession of any person.'<sup>1</sup>

D'Eon was unable to leave England unless he made some arrangement with his creditors, still oppressed as he was by the liabilities he had incurred in the furtherance of the late King's service, and no sooner had his imminent departure become extensively known, than something like a panic seized upon all who had engaged in the speculations on his sex. Three several actions

<sup>1</sup> *Archives des affaires étrangères.* Gaill. 292.

were commenced in Easter term, against three underwriters in the city, for the recovery of the respective sums underwritten by them. Upwards of 120,000*l.* had been underwritten at various times on this mysterious question, but rather than 'risk a heat over the Bacon course in Westminster Hall,' several eminent merchants forfeited sixty per cent., and even seventy per cent., to have their names cancelled from the policies they had underwritten.

One trial on the legality of these policies took place before Lord Mansfield, on July 1, when it was believed that the sex of the Chevalier was established beyond the possibility of a doubt. The action was brought by Mr. Hayes, a surgeon in Leicester Fields, against Mr. Jacques, broker and underwriter, for the recovery of 700*l.*, the said Jacques having, about six years previously, received a premium of fifteen guineas, on the engagement to return one hundred guineas for every guinea, whenever it should be proved that the Chevalier was actually a female. Mr. Buller, as counsel for Hayes, opened the cause by stating the fairness of the transaction and the justifiable nature of the demand, the plaintiff believing himself to be in possession of sufficient proof to establish the sex of the Chevalier. He called for his first witness a surgeon named Le Goux,<sup>1</sup> who gave evidence to the effect that he had been acquainted with the Chevalier D'Eon from the time that the Duke de Nivernois was ambassador in London; that about five years previously he was called in by the Chevalier to lend professional aid, when she was labouring under a disorder which led to the discovery of her sex, of which he, Le Goux, was able to give satisfactory

<sup>1</sup> Le Gueux would have been a more suitable name, as the sequel will show.

testimony. Another witness was Morande, with whom we are so intimately acquainted, who deposed that so far back as July 3, 1774, the Chevalier had made to him a free disclosure of her sex, even to displaying her bosom, and exhibiting her female wardrobe, which consisted of sacks, petticoats, and other garments for feminine use. On the part of the defendant, Mr. Mansfield pleaded that this was one of those gambling, indecent, and unnecessary cases that ought never to be permitted to come into a court of justice; that besides the inutility and indecency of the case, the plaintiff had taken advantage of his client, being in possession of intelligence that enabled him to lay with greater certainty, although with such great odds on his side; that the plaintiff, at the time of laying the wager, knew that the Court of France treated with the Chevalier as a woman to grant her a pension, and that the French Court must have some strong circumstances to imbibe that idea; he therefore hoped that the jury would reprobate such wagers.

In charging the jury, Lord Mansfield expressed his abhorrence of the whole transaction, and of its being brought into a Court of Justice when it might have been settled elsewhere, and wished that their verdict could so operate that neither party might be the winner; but, as the law did not expressly prohibit, and the wager was laid, the question before them was, who had won? His lordship observed that the indecency of the proceeding arose more from the unnecessary questions asked than from the case itself. There was every external proof that the defendant was right in his conjecture. D'Eon was dressed as a man, would have fought duels, was captain of dragoons, and had resided here as an ambassador; therefore, to all appearances the defendant

had the best of the wager. On the part of the plaintiff there was a considerable difficulty. Suppose him to have been right, yet the proof of the fact was not easy. It was not in the power of any person to compel D'Eon to disclose her sex, and was it known, the proof still rested on the plaintiff. It had been thrown out that he was sure of the fact at the time he laid the wager. The contrary has appeared, for he had no proofs in his power at the time the contract was entered into. . . . The Court of France considered D'Eon as a man; there were reasons afterwards to believe the contrary. . . . It might have been difficult to prove the sex, if private quarrels of the parties had not furnished collateral evidence as put the question out of doubt. The witnesses were either perjured, or their testimonies must be credited. As was the case in all wagers, both parties conceived themselves certain of winning. His lordship called upon the jury to consider all the circumstances, and if they thought that the bet was fairly won to decide in favour of the plaintiff, for whom a verdict was given, without any hesitation on the part of the jury—for 700*l.* and forty shillings—a verdict awaited with intense interest, as numerous sums on policies were depending on this suit. When, however, this policy business came to be solemnly signed before Lord Mansfield, in the Court of King's Bench, the defendant pleaded a late Act of Parliament for the non-payment of the policy he had underwritten, a statute which provided that 'no insurance shall be valid, where the person insuring cannot prove an antecedent interest in the person or thing insured.' The Chief Justice having admitted the statute to be binding in the present instance, the decision at once and for ever deprived all

insurers in the 'D'Eon policies' of the golden harvest they so long and patiently expected.<sup>1</sup>

D'Eon received the intimation that he was declared by the law to be a female with perfect equanimity. 'What does it matter to me that the King's Bench has proclaimed me to be a female! I am none the better or the worse. I am in the same condition as before the war—in *eodem statu ante bellum*.' He had failed in his application for a postponement of the trial until he should return from France, and having abstained from taking any part in the proceedings, it was bruited about that such discretion was to be rewarded with a bonus of twenty thousand pounds!

D'Eon appeared in London in 'her real character as a female, for the first time on August 6, being dressed in an elegant sack, her head-dress adorned with diamonds, and bedecked in all the other elegant paraphernalia of her sex;' but with the laudable desire of completely disconnecting herself from the smallest suspicion of wishing to countenance either of the contending parties in the gambling policies, when the day fixed upon for her departure from London had arrived, she drove off from her house in Brewer Street, in a neat post-chaise and four, wearing her uniform with the cross of Saint Louis, and suitably attended.<sup>2</sup> The whole of her effects remained in England, her stock of wine, which was large and valuable, being left with her landlord to be sold for the benefit of her creditors.

Henry Angelo tells us that the first time he saw D'Eon dressed as a woman was in Brewer Street.

'To my surprise I beheld a lusty dame dressed in black silk, the head-dress in rosed *toupet* and laced cap. He had not the

<sup>1</sup> *Gentleman's Magazine*, vol. xlv.

<sup>2</sup> *Scots Magazine*, vol. xxxix.

least beard—a diamond necklace, long stays, and an old-fashioned stomacher. My father leading me to the assumed lady, I received, *à la Française*, a kiss on each cheek. Ever afterwards, when he dined at our house, though dressed as a woman, when the ladies retired he remained to enjoy the glass and conversation. He always dressed in black silk, and when I last saw him, looked like a woman worn out with age and care.'

Angelo was entertained to 'an excellent dinner' one day after D'Eon had donned the petticoat, there being amongst the guests Bach, Abel, and Cramer.

The Chevalier left London on August 13, and in the 'Morning Post and Public Advertiser,' &c., of the 15th, appeared her protest against the malicious charge of being interested in the issue of the late trial.

'I requested with the greatest earnestness the people of England, who have always shown me the greatest respect, not to renew any policies respecting my sex; I declared that I would not agree to a judicial manifestation of it; requested there should be no fresh policies entered into, and that the old ones should be annulled, and that if this was not agreed to, I should be obliged to quit a place which I regard as my second country. The *auri sacra fames* which possesses my enemies has unhappily prevailed. They have not only renewed the ancient policies, but have obtained a judgment in the Court of King's Bench, July 1, to determine my sex. In consequence, I with regret keep my promise. I quit with grief my dear England, where I thought to have found repose and liberty, to return to my native country. . . . If those interested in the policies would take my advice, it should be to pay nothing; because the judgment in the King's Bench was made without my participation, and against my consent, which I opposed at the time of the sitting of the Court, desiring it to be delayed till my master should permit me again to return to England. . . . I would rather perish than rise triumphant by the weakness of that sex which I am accused to be of. . . . I here absolutely declare, and probably for the last time, that if any person, whether in France or England, can prove before any tribunal that I have been

interested to the value of one shilling, in any policies, I will agree to distribute all I am possessed of to any public charity the said tribunal shall name. THE CHEVALIER D'EON.'

'London, August 10, 1777.'

D'Eon's residence in England had extended over fifteen years, and it was with no inconsiderable feelings of emotion that he again touched his native soil. Hurrying to Versailles, he presented himself, equipped as a dragoon, before the Count de Vergennes, who received him affably and with distinction, but at once enjoined him to execute the terms of his Covenant, and not appear unless in female attire. D'Eon demurred, pleading, first one thing, then another, but the minister was obdurate, and soon the Chevalière was favoured with the following order :—

IN THE KING'S NAME.

'Charles-Geneviève-Louise-Auguste-André-Timothée D'Eon de Beaumont is hereby commanded to lay aside the uniform of a dragoon, which he has been in the habit of wearing, and resume the garments of her sex, and is forbidden to appear in any part of the kingdom in any other garments than those suitable to females.

'LOUIS.

'GRAVIER DE VERGENNES.'

'Done at Versailles, August 19, 1777.'

The Count de Vergennes had asked M. Genest, chief clerk at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, to receive his old friend the Chevalier in his own house, and manage him as best he could. Upon hearing of his arrival, the Queen sent word to Genest that he was to bring the Chevalier to her. Genest, having informed the minister of her Majesty's commands, received instructions to accompany the Chevalier ; but the count having previously had a few minutes' audience of the Queen, she left the room with him, and finding Genest in the

adjoining apartment, her Majesty told him, smiling, that she was sorry to have given him any trouble, the few words the count had just said to her having for ever cured her of her curiosity.<sup>1</sup> And yet she did not remain unmindful of him. When D'Eon sought to put off the evil hour of his transformation by pitiably pleading that she had no suitable clothes in which to appear, even the Queen's eagerness for novelty and amusement seemed to conspire against her. Her Majesty seized upon so exceptional an opportunity 'for exercising the nobility of her soul and the generosity of her heart, in causing Mademoiselle Bertin, one of her ladies-in-waiting, to complete an outfit which would have sufficed for any four girls of the royal house of St. Cyr.'<sup>2</sup>

D'Eon was delighted at the respite afforded by the time required for preparing a trousseau in accordance with the Queen's commands, and he made the most of it by paying a visit to his mother, whom he had not seen for many years. In acknowledging the receipt of the King's order of August 19, the Chevalier informed the minister that the few articles of female attire he had by him were quite unsuitable for making his appearance at Versailles. Mademoiselle Bertin had consequently undertaken to procure the clothing necessary for his new condition of life, and to turn him into a fairly modest and obedient woman; and to her, after Heaven, the King, and his ministers, would belong the greatest merit in connection with his miraculous conversion. His earnest desire to appear irreproachable in the eyes of the King and of the Counts de Vergennes and de Maurepas, sufficed to endue him with the strength required to overcome himself, and adopt a

<sup>1</sup> Campan, i. 180.

<sup>2</sup> Ch. MSS.



sweetness of disposition in conformity with the new existence into which he was forced.<sup>1</sup> This letter was signed, 'The Chevalier D'Eon for a little while longer.'

D'Eon likens his reception at his home to that given to the prodigal son. In transports of joy his mother calls all her friends together to rejoice with her over the sheep that was lost, and was found again—her daughter—who had been her son for a time only, but now was, and should for ever be, a daughter to her! She holds three days' feasting, to which all the authorities of the town and neighbourhood are invited. The mayor and aldermen, the ecclesiastical, monastical, military, and civil bodies, and a deputation formed of the married and maiden ladies of Tonnerre, call upon Madame D'Eon and overwhelm her with their congratulations. Each evening, two casks of wine are placed at the gate of the house, and bread and meat is distributed to the people, who give vent to their enthusiasm by firing guns and crackers, and nearly causing a conflagration in the stable-yard and granaries. It was only after these memorable incidents at the place of her birth, that the Chevalier's heart felt less heavy; but he was very shortly ordered back by the ministers, and having returned to Versailles, he bound himself, in a written declaration, never to transgress the orders of the King, to whom he swore, in the presence of the Counts de Maurepas and de Vergennes, that he should die, as in duty bound, a female.<sup>2</sup>

The choice of the day upon which, from Chevalier, D'Eon was to be formally and effectively transformed into Chevalière, was made by his relative, Christopher

<sup>1</sup> *Archives des affaires étrangères.* Gaill. 296.

<sup>2</sup> Preamble to Will. Ch. MSS.

de Beaumont,<sup>1</sup> Archbishop of Paris, Madame Louise<sup>2</sup> having greatly interested herself in his behalf. On the morning of October 21, 1777, the Feast of St. Ursula, Mademoiselle D'Eon having been deprived, by order of the King, of all her male attire, was clothed by Mademoiselle Bertin in her new female habiliments, with the injunction never to lay them aside, but to wear them to the end of her days. She was anointed with fragrant perfumes, her hair was curled, and a magnificent head-dress put on her; her gown, petticoats, and stockings were of the richest materials, and she was adorned with bracelets, a necklace, earrings, and rings. At the moment of her transformation, apparelled like a bride for her bridegroom, she excelled the Queen of Sheba herself, in all her glory. In this quality she was presented at Court, and there compelled to remain two years, that she might become moulded into her new condition.

‘I cannot express my repugnance, my grief, my pain, my troubled state, my vexation, and my shame, at having to appear thus publicly at Court in the dress and position of a female; but the King’s council considered such a change indispensable. . . . What appeared to some as extraordinary and degrading in an old chevalier of Saint Louis, appeared to others as most natural, reasonable, and noble, and the refrain of the ladies at Court to the chevaliers of Saint Louis was to this effect: “Since your Chevalier D'Eon is a female, it is but right she should dress as one, and we wish it for our glory.”

‘My first duty on resuming female attire was to communicate in the chapel of the Virgin behind the choir of the cathedral at Paris; then at that of St. Sulpitius, where I had been confirmed and had taken the name of Mary, and where I had also

<sup>1</sup> This was the prelate who supported the curé of Saint-Sulpice in his refusal to inter the remains of Voltaire.

<sup>2</sup> Marie Louise, daughter of Louis XV., was received into the Convent of St. Denis.

communicated for the first time. I afterwards communicated in the chapel of St. Geneviève in Paris, in the beautiful chapel of the Virgin at St. Roch, and again in the church of the sisterhood of St. Mary at Chaillot. In being stripped of man's estate and of my uniform, I am divested of every vice and of every danger incidental to such a condition ; and being invested with the character of a female, am forced, in spite of myself, to adopt the vocations and virtues incumbent thereon.' <sup>1</sup>

Household of Marie Antoinette at the time of the Chevalière's introduction :—

Madame Misery . . . .	<i>First Lady-in-Waiting.</i>
Madame Campan <sup>2</sup> . . . .	<i>Second Lady-in-Waiting.</i>
Mdlle. Adelaïde Genest <sup>2</sup> . . . .	<i>Third Lady-in-Waiting.</i>
Guimard . . . . .	<i>Groom-in-Waiting to the late</i> <i>Louis XV.</i>
Lasone . . . . .	<i>Physician.</i>

The Chevalière, we are told by those who saw her at this period, was slow enough in adapting herself to the requirements of her sex ; it would be long, she used to say, before she became accustomed to them, and would have continued to dress as a man had it been possible. At first she laughed at her petticoats and cap, saying it was very hard to be degraded from captain to a cornet ! (*cornette*), and was altogether careless in her demeanour. She was of a fair complexion, with fair hair slightly grey, and having a handsome neck and bosom appeared to advantage as a female ; she had formerly made herself a beard, and her chin being provided with some hairs, she employed herself in nipping them. Wearing low, though somewhat large heels, her stature did not exceed five feet four inches, and those who had not seen her in uniform, could not conceive how she could have looked well in

<sup>1</sup> Ch. MSS. 954, 1,154.

<sup>2</sup> Daughters of M. Genest, at whose house the Chevalière was residing.

it.<sup>1</sup> Her accent was peculiar, but not unbecoming as her voice was agreeable,<sup>2</sup> and in making a courtesy she would bend her knees forward quickly without otherwise moving her limbs. Being recommended to put on some rouge, she replied that she had tried it, but it would not stick to her face; she despised her body, she said, which she considered as the case or shell only of her soul.

Being one day in a room where several gentlemen, strangers to her, were present, a lady having remarked, 'Chevalière, to the best of my recollection when you were dressed as a man you had a very handsome leg!' 'Parbleu!' replied D'Eon with vivacity, pulling up her petticoats, 'if you are curious to see it, here it is!' Upon another occasion a lady observed to her, 'If you wished to demand satisfaction, would you not regret your former condition and your arms?' 'I have already considered this matter,' she replied; 'when I quitted my hat and sword, I own it gave me some concern, but I said to myself, what does it signify? I may do as much, perhaps, with my slipper?' And to another lady who gave some advice with regard to her behaviour, she said: 'Madam, I shall always be *sage*,

<sup>1</sup> I will quote from one among the several sensational descriptions of D'Eon's personal appearance, scarcely thinking it necessary to remind the reader that she was not a colonel, nor had she been at Fontenoy. '... He was at the period referred to about forty-seven years of age, tall and muscular, swarthy, sunburnt, weather-beaten, scarred, having been wounded in several engagements, since, as a youth of fifteen, he began his career at Fontenoy. ... For many years this bold colonel of dragoons has been known as the Chevalier Eon de Beaumont. ... From under the shade of his thick shaggy eyebrows gleam a pair of bright bold-looking eyes ... in his triple row of ruffles, *mantelet à la reine*, and *bonnet à la baigneuse* surmounting a row of grizzly curls, he looks a very odd figure of fun.'—*French Court and Society, Reign of Louis XVI. and First Empire*, by Catherine Charlotte, Lady Jackson. 1881.

<sup>2</sup> Gudin, quoted by Loménie, i. 417, says it was 'une voix de femme.'

no doubt, but I can never be modest.' Upon the whole, however, the Chevalière seldom appeared in public, limiting herself to dining with her old friends. If she chanced, upon such occasions, to be in the same room with some other knight who happened to be addressed as 'Monsieur le Chevalier,' she would instantly turn round thinking she was meant, and would equally forget herself in her assiduity towards the fair sex, never failing to assist a lady to wine, when sitting at table, or rising with alacrity to relieve her of her empty coffee cup.<sup>1</sup> She was a great eater, and usually partook of every dish, even if she sent her plate away directly after.

Since D'Eon was not visible to the world at large in Paris, it became the fashion to personate her at masquerades, and even at ordinary evening parties, when Beaumarchais would also be brought into ridicule by the pretended Chevalière relating, for the amusement of the company, the incidents of her courtship with that individual. The tales told, however, were not always harmless, and one report spread, was to the effect that a portion of the money destined by the King for the Chevalière's use in England, and confided to Beaumarchais, had been appropriated by the latter, who accordingly complained to de Vergennes of the base accusation, charging D'Eon with being the author of it. He was at once reassured by that minister, who wrote word that his Majesty's satisfaction at the correctness of the accounts he had rendered should suffice to vindicate his character from any such attacks; and having obtained permission to publish the minister's letter, he sent a copy to D'Eon under cover of some offensive and very angry lines. Calmer judgments had

<sup>1</sup> *Gentleman's Magazine*, vol. xlviii. *Scots Magazine*, vol. xl.

certainly not as yet prevailed in the unsettled mind that was ever craving after excitement; and in malicious enjoyment of Beaumarchais' participation in his own unenviable notoriety, D'Eon seized the opportunity for indulging in his favourite recreation, by treating the Minister for Foreign Affairs to one of the most tedious effusions of which he had ever being guilty, but humorous and satirical withal.

'Now that I have obeyed the King's commands in resuming female attire on the feast day of St. Ursula, patroness of the eleven thousand virgins and martyrs in England; now that I am living in tranquillity and peace in the uniform of a vestal, and that I had completely forgotten Caron and his boat, judge of my surprise in receiving an epistle from the said Caron, enclosing copies, duly certified, of a letter he addressed to you and of your reply. . . . What has he done for me? . . . He has made me blush for my country by paying a sum of money in the name of the State, in bills at six, twelve, eighteen, and twenty-four months date, charging seven per cent. discount, and finally swindling an English peer out of two hundred and thirty-three louis. . . . Was it not M. Beaumarchais who, unable to persuade me to be dishonest in supporting him in his speculations on my sex, spread the report everywhere in Paris that he was to marry me after I should have spent seven months at the abbey of the Ladies of St. Anthony, when, as a fact, he was within an inch of being espoused to my cane, whilst in London? . . . Let me tell you that fictitious Demoiselles D'Eon, wearing the cross of Saint Louis, have made their appearance in more than one fashionable house in Paris. They were jesters who said the most absurd things of the real Chevalière, and chiefly with reference to the agreeable and honourable Caron de Beaumarchais, who proposed marriage to the Demoiselle D'Eon when on his late embassy in England; and whose coming embassy to Congress in America is for the purpose of importing snuff of a quality that will make the entire audience sneeze each time his plagiarist, the "Barber of Seville," is performed. The scene of the false Demoiselle D'Eon was repeated, I am informed, last week,

in a house where Madame de F—— was hoaxed by Musson, the well-known painter, who personated the Demoiselle at the time that I, lonely and peaceful, was at work and asleep in my hermitage at Petit Montreuil. . . . Does M. de Beaumarchais, so fond of hoaxing others, desire to enjoy the exclusive privilege? . . . Let me tell you, sir, that all the integrity of the four ministers put together, adding to it that of their chief clerks, would fail to make an honest man of Caron, so far as I am concerned. People in England are convinced of this, for they have nicknamed him *bon marché*. . . .

‘LA CHEVALIÈRE D’EON.’

Passing over the reply sent to Beaumarchais, we find ‘The Appeal of Mademoiselle D’Eon to her Contemporaries,’ which also went through the press:—

‘Where is the woman who, having read the famous letters of M. Carillon<sup>1</sup> or Caron de Beaumarchais, of January 3 and 13, addressed to the minister and to me, has not said, She will reply! . . . He has sought, by base artifice, to deprive me of that consideration so conducive to my peaceful existence. I put him to confusion by ridiculing his impotent rage. He is a Thersites who should be whipped, for having dared to be insolent to his betters whom he ought to respect. I denounce and abandon him to all womankind of my day, as one who would fain have exalted himself at the expense of a woman, enriched himself by sacrificing a woman’s honour, and avenged his frustrated hopes by crushing a woman, who, of all others, has at heart the triumph of her sex.

‘N.B.—Caron has certified to and signed the copies of the two letters he has published; I cause copies of my two letters to be certified and signed by Barth. Pille, surnamed La Grenade, my valet, whose signature has always been respected.’

‘I certify that these two letters are true copies of the originals in my hands, this 2nd day of February, 1778.

‘PILLE, surnamed LA GRENADE.’

Amongst the later causes tried in London for the recovery of sums forfeited by the wagers on D’Eon’s

<sup>1</sup> In allusion to Beaumarchais’ early apprenticeship.

sex, was that of Jones and Dacosta, in which a verdict was given in favour of the plaintiff; but a motion having been made in the Court of King's Bench for an arrest in judgment, Lord Mansfield delivered his opinion in its favour, in which all the other judges concurred. The decision, he said, tended to indecency, and to make the courts of justice subservient to the purposes of gamblers and swindlers—a conclusion that was heartily approved by all right-minded persons throughout the country.

No sooner had the news reached D'Eon than he issued a 'Second Letter to Women,' dated Paris, February 10, 1778, opening with these words:—

'Victory! my contemporaries, victory! My honour, your honour, triumphs. The Lord Chief Justice of England has himself, in the presence of the twelve judges of England, rescinded and annulled his own decisions on the validity of the policies raised on my sex . . . '

<sup>1</sup> *Pièces Relatives*, &c. 243.



## CHAPTER XVII.

Epistle to Lord Mansfield—Voltaire on D'Eon—Anxiety to get quit of petticoats—Mademoiselle D'Eon de Beaumont in peaceful retreats—Applies for active service in the fleet—Returns to male attire, is arrested, and confined—Being liberated goes home—Arrival in London—Fences before the Prince of Wales—Mr. Angelo—Mademoiselle D'Eon and Phillidor at chess—Advertised sale of library—Treatment by a British peer the cause thereof—Earl Ferrers' bond—Sale of jewellery.

THERE appeared at about this time in England the translation of a letter in verse from D'Eon to Lord Mansfield, on the decision he had pronounced in the late trial. In his preface the translator frankly states that he has taken the liberty of deviating a little from the original, especially where Mademoiselle, in her address to his lordship, and in the warmth of her imagination, had seemed to have forgotten that she was in petticoats. The title page is illustrated with a plate representing the Chevalière in a double character, the right half of her body being in the dress of a dragoon with drawn sword in hand, the left half appearing as a buxom woman waving a fan.<sup>1</sup>

A variety of similar grotesque likenesses made their appearance, one by Bradel, in Paris, also representing the Chevalière in both sexes. Other portraits, however, were in glorification of the heroine, the most remarkable being that published in *mezzo-tinto* by S. Hooper, of Ludgate Hill, in which she appears as Pallas.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *An Epistle from Mademoiselle D'Eon to the Right Hon. L——d M——d, C——f J——e of the C——t of K——g's B——h, on his determination in regard to her sex.* London, 1778.

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix.

One of these prints having found its way to Voltaire, to whom D'Eon was not entirely a stranger, the old sage wrote to his friend d'Argental :—

'They have sent me a Chevalier D'Eon represented as Minerva, and a supposed warrant of the King conferring a pension of twelve thousand livres on this amazon, and commanding her to observe the most respectful silence, as was enjoined on the Jansenistes in other times. Here is a nice problem for history. Some Academy of Inscriptions will prove the case to be most authentic. D'Eon will be a Maid of Orleans who will not have been burnt. It will be seen how we have improved in our customs.'<sup>1</sup>

D'Eon's affected gaiety at length gave way ; she fell into a state of melancholy, and then became quite ill, physically and morally. The Queen's physician, Lasone, and the King's physician, Lieutard, were ordered to hold a consultation, and terminated their visit by saying to the patient : 'Be comforted, dear lady ; yours is an incurable complaint, and will disappear as it came.'<sup>2</sup>

But it was not in D'Eon's nature to repose in moody silence, and she poured out her sorrows in pitiful appeals to the Counts de Sartines, de Vergennes, and de Broglio, praying, for the sake of her health, which was being seriously injured from want of exercise and the compulsory abandonment of the active habits of a lifetime, that she should be permitted to wear male attire, at least on Sundays and festivals ; she was ashamed and sick at heart to be in petticoats, idly enjoying a pension instead of serving her King and country as she had been doing for so many years ; and, further, she asked to be employed in the war that was on the eve of breaking out, France being about to become the active ally of the Americans.

<sup>1</sup> March 17, 1777.

<sup>2</sup> Ch. MSS.

The Chevalière had been exerting herself to save France from meddling in the War of Independence, undertaking to prove that the reasons alleged in the manifesto of the French Court were not founded either on philosophical or political arguments,<sup>1</sup> representations to which de Vergennes, who was easily accessible to her, was disposed to give his attention. But Beaumarchais had everything to gain by the prosecution of the war, and secured to himself all access to the French Court, to the exclusion of D'Eon, who found it impossible to approach either King or ministers. Individually, de Vergennes' treatment of D'Eon had always been considerate, and at times indulgent, and since all her supplications to the several ministers had been treated with callous indifference, she imagined she might succeed in disburdening herself of the yoke imposed upon her by getting back to London if she could but secure his interest and influence. 'Tis said that James I. of England thought that if he were ever to be confined in a prison, he should wish that prison to be a library. D'Eon pleaded hard that her books and some valuable MSS., all 'so dear to her purse and to her heart,' were in London, where she desired to live in retirement with them for her companions. Her metamorphosis, her long illness, the war, the almost sudden death of Lord Ferrers, and the non-payment of monies legitimately due to her, had despoiled her of health and fortune, and she reminded the minister that the pledges contained in his letter of July 12, 1777, confirming the intentions of the late King in his order of April 1, 1766, left her at liberty to go whithersoever she would.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ch. MSS. 719. *European Magazine*, 1791.

<sup>2</sup> Bibliothèque de Tonnerre. Gaill. 310-316.

The reply, in his Majesty's name, was a firm refusal.

If D'Eon had sinned, she was as surely suffering. There was no hope whatever of escape from her bondage, and with her high spirit seemingly humbled, she sought, or pretended to seek for comfort in the consolations of religion. She retired, she says, speaking of herself, to different convents, that she might acquire the customs, habits, occupations and virtues which most became her, and if she had offered a bad example in wearing the King's uniform in time of war, she made ample reparation by wearing, in time of peace, the Queen's uniform amongst the ladies at Court; then she adds, comically enough, that it was to the edification of the Church and of her neighbours she retired frequently to the 'Abbaye Royale des Dames de Hautes-Bruyères,' to the 'Maison des Demoiselles de St. Cyr,' and to the 'Monastère des Filles de Ste. Marie.' In accepting the invitation to visit the ladies at St. Cyr, D'Eon thus wrote to Madame ———, one of the inmates:—

'I cannot in any other way acknowledge the kindness and courtesy of yourself, Madame, of the Lady Superior, and of the ladies of St. Cyr, than in giving you my word as a *chevalier* that I shall do myself the honour, and consider it my duty, to be at St. Cyr on Monday next, the 14th, at such hour as may be most convenient to you. I purpose going alone, so that nothing shall divert my attention whilst on my way to the house of the Lord's elect, and that I may be the better able to benefit by the holiness of your conversation, which is the living expression of the peace that reigns in your hearts, and in the purity of your existence. When I compare the happiness of the solitude you enjoy, and in which I have ever delighted, without being able to experience the pleasure of it, to my terribly agitated existence in the several armies and European Courts during the last forty years, I feel how much I have been

removed from the God of humility by the demon of glory; I feel that if I had done for Him the hundredth part of what I had the happiness to do for Louis XV. and for myself, instead of now wearing a red ribbon, I might some day have worn, together with yourselves, the crown of immortality which God has promised to wise virgins. Like a foolish virgin, I have been running after the shadow of things, whilst you, wise virgins, possess the substance through steadfastly abiding in the house of the Lord, and in the path of virtue. *Erravi a via justitiæ et sol intelligentiæ non luxit in me.* My only consolation to-day is, that I have had the happiness of preserving intact the flower of purity, the pledge so precious and frail, alas! of our existence and of our faith—and this in the confusion of camps, battles, and sieges. . . . The only mercy I now ask of God is, not to die in the hands of physicians, surgeons, and apothecaries, but that a cannon ball may carry me off; otherwise, to let me die in solitude. . . . I pray, Madame, that God may preserve all of our sex from the passion for vain glory, and the love of arms, which is the most serious and dangerous. I alone know what it has cost me to rise above myself. Alas! what restless nights have I not passed for the sake of a few bright and happy days! Truly, it is better to admire from afar the example I have given, than to imitate it. My happiness is nothing but smoke, *fumus*, and I admit that all is vanity of vanities in this world! Until I am able to present to you the original, allow me to offer you the best portrait that has been issued of me in England. I am represented as Pallas. Another is about to be published in Paris, as announced in the “Gazette de France,” and of which you shall have a copy. . . .<sup>1</sup>

‘LA CHEVALIÈRE D'EON.’

‘Versailles, Rue de Noailles,

‘Pavillon Marjon, September 12, 1778.’

D'Eon's strength of character enabled her to shape her deportment at the several retreats she visited with honourable and scrupulous observance of the rules of those institutions, conduct induced from prudential considerations, and she spent her time in the profuse

<sup>1</sup> Bibliothèque de Tonnerre. Gaill. 307.

waste of paper, writing prayers of her own composition, cunningly adapted to one in her singularly anomalous position, *e.g.* :—

‘God of armies, it was through Thy inspiration that I followed the standards of the most Christian King, in the last war. It was Thou who gavest me the shield of faith, the breast-plate of chastity, the helmet of truth, the sword of justice, and the courage *du dragon*. I earnestly long to rejoin the army in this new war; give me the prudence of Judith, the wisdom of Deborah, the courage of Jeanne d’Arc, and the valour of Jeanne Hachette, so that it may be said that by the weakness of my arm Thou hast wrought great things. *Quia fecisti mihi mirabilia !*’<sup>1</sup>

At each of the homes where she stayed the Chevalière was supplied with formulas of prayer in MS., copied for her own special edification, as stated on the title-page of each pamphlet :—‘Oraisons de l’Eglise pour tous les temps de l’année Mpt. copié pour Mademoiselle D’Eon pendant sa retraite, en 1778, à l’Abbaye Royale des Dames de Hautes-Bruyères, dépendante de la célèbre Abbaye de Fontevault fondée l’an 1100, par le bien-heureux Robert d’Arbrissel. Réflexions Morales. Sentiments de Piété. Sentiments sur l’Oraison Mentale.’

It is clear that the Chevalière was by no means yielding to the supposed advantageous influences by which she was surrounded, no benefit being conferred on her agitated mind by the religious austerity in the midst of which so many of her days were being passed. The profound meditations in which she indulged with others were not those of the cloister, her thoughts being too actively engaged in evolving to herself scheme after scheme for obtaining freedom from the restraint imposed by her hated petticoats, chafing as she was to

<sup>1</sup> Ch. MSS.

join the King's forces. It is true that the war being necessarily a naval one, it was not the soldiers of France who were called to the strife; but D'Eon showed herself equal to the occasion when addressing herself, this time to the Count de Maurepas, president of the council, more pathetically and entreatingly than to any of the other ministers:—

‘ . . . I must represent to you most humbly and most firmly that the year of my female novitiate having expired, it is impossible for me to continue a profession of that sex. The expenses are beyond my means, and my income is too limited. . . . This very sedentary life is completely ruining the elasticity of my body and mind. . . . I renew this year my entreaties that you will obtain the King's permission for me to re-enter his service, and there being no fighting on land, that I be allowed to serve as a volunteer in the fleet of the Count d'Orvilliers.<sup>1</sup> I have managed to live in petticoats in time of peace, from a desire to obey the orders of the King and of his ministers, but I find it impossible to do this in time of war. . . . Assist me, Monseigneur, to escape out of the lethargic state into which I have been plunged . . . it is a *matter of great moment to the glory of the house of de Guerchy that I should be allowed to continue my military career; at least such is the general opinion in the army in France, and I might say all over enlightened Europe; whereas my present inconsistent course of life gives cause for the gravest misconstructions, and affords material to the maliciously disposed.* I have always thought and acted as did Achilles. *I am not at war with the dead, and I do not destroy the living unless they are the first to attack me.* You have my written word of honour for this. . . . You are not aware that it is I who support my mother, my sister, my brother-in-law, and my three nephews in the King's service; that I am still in debt in London, where I have left the whole of my library and my

<sup>1</sup> A drawn battle was fought between Keppel and d'Orvilliers off Ushant, in July 1778, previous to which the French admiral in command of the combined squadrons of France and Spain, consisting of sixty-five ships of the line, besides frigates, &c., had ridden master of the Channel for a considerable time.

papers in chambers, for which I am paying 24 francs a week. . . . You must be aware that to play the part of a maid at Court is one of the most stupid imaginable, so long as I am still able to play that of a lion in the army. . . .'<sup>1</sup>

D'Eon must have been fully persuaded that escape out of her state of wretchedness was impossible, and that the pen and ink agitation, in which she was repeating so much sad nonsense, would prove fruitless, for, in writing, on the very next day, to her nephews who were about leaving to take part in the war, she playfully observed that the King, or rather his presiding minister, absolutely refused to allow her to join the forces, through fear, no doubt, that the indomitable English who in other days had burned, in Normandy, the Maid of Orleans, might now be guilty of drowning, in America, the Maid of Tonnerre! Whatever the intentions of the ministers with regard to the epicene D'Eon, her allusions to the de Guerchy family, and her ill-concealed desire to avenge herself on the son of her old and deceased enemy, could only have served to confirm them in their earliest resolution that she should not, under any circumstances, be liberated from the thralldom into which she had yielded her person.

Neglected by all at Court, and perhaps despised, as she conceived herself to be, the Chevalière resolved upon throwing off the badges of her servitude, and again appearing as a captain of dragoons; but she was immediately arrested and conveyed to the castle of the old Dukes of Burgundy, at Dijon, where she remained confined during the space of two months. Consenting

<sup>1</sup> This unpublished letter, dated Rue de Noailles, Versailles, February 8, 1779, in the Egerton Collection at the B.M., appears to be the original. At the top of the first page is written in another hand: 'Parler à M. le Comte de Vergennes.' How did it get into the Egerton Collection?



to take things in a more philosophic spirit, and return to her laces and skirts, she was permitted to reappear in Paris, and there, on September 20, was confirmed, by order of the King and the Count de Vergennes, the draft of a deed granting a life-annuity of twelve thousand livres, out of the funds of the Department for Foreign Affairs, unto 'Charlotte - Geneviève - Louisa - Augusta - André-Timothée D'Eon de Beaumont, formerly known as the Chevalier D'Eon ;' this being the first occasion upon which she was officially styled by her new appellations. After this D'Eon completely disappeared from society, having gone to live with her aged mother at Tonnerre, where travellers, impelled by natural curiosity, made it a point to see her if they could. In this way she entertained at her table Prince Henry of Prussia, brother to Frederick the Great, who had met her in Germany during the war.

D'Eon does not appear to have absented herself from Tonnerre until about the middle of 1785, when she went to stay with the Duchess de Montmorency-Bouteville, and at the Hôtel des Dames de France, in the Rue de Baume, Paris. France and England being again at peace, since September 1783, she was maturing her plans for obtaining permission to return to London, where she was anxious to recover the money that was owed to her, and save from dispersion the property she had left in charge of her landlord, who, unable to obtain any advance upon the rent due, had already, upon one occasion, publicly advertised for sale the 'valuable library and curious manuscripts of the Chevalière D'Eon, to refund himself for the space occupied by the said library in his house during seven years'—a sale the Chevalière succeeded in arresting by some arrangement

with her creditor.<sup>1</sup> It was not, however, until the rulers of France conceived the right moment had arrived, and they were as good as their word, that D'Eon received official intimation of her movements being relieved from all restriction, with freedom to leave France if she chose, and with scarcely a day's delay she made her exit from Paris in a post-chaise, attended by her maid, arriving in London on November 17, and putting up at her old chambers in Brewer Street. She was well received by her friends of former days, amongst whom are specially named Lord Tamworth, Colonel Kemys Tynte,<sup>2</sup> and Mrs. Church.

With no other resources but the modest pension of 12,000 livres, D'Eon was hard pushed for very existence in the face of her liabilities, many of ancient date, notwithstanding the five thousand pounds sterling paid by Louis XVI. to extricate her out of her difficulties, for the monetary transactions between the French Chevalière and the English peer resulted in grievous distress to the former, as we shall presently see. Forced by reason of this to live in strict seclusion, we almost lose sight of her until April 9, 1787, the day appointed for an assault-at-arms in the presence of the Prince of Wales at Carlton House, and to which, as a fencer of distinguished reputation, she was invited. D'Eon and Mr. Angelo, Sen., were nominated by his Royal Highness judges for the occasion, there being present several of the most accomplished fencers of the day, such as the mulatto, the celebrated Saint-George, and his companions Fabien and de la Motte; also Angelo, Jun., Nogee, Reda, Rolland, and Goddard. The novelty of a

<sup>1</sup> Ch. MSS. *Courier de l'Europe*, November 9, 1784.

<sup>2</sup> Of Kavenmally, near Newport, Monmouthshire. Lord Mount Edgumbe humorously observed one day, that 'D'Eon was her own widow!'

lady in petticoats engaging the most experienced and able masters excited much mirth, even those who had known her *en culottes* being not a little surprised at the skill she displayed in fencing with Saint-George. Her petticoats did not incommode her in the least, but it was clear that the late captain of dragoons proved herself to be more expert at the *risposte* than a courtesy, and at handling a foil more gracefully than she did a fan. Quoting from another newspaper:—

‘The most remarkable occurrence of the fencing match at Carlton House was the assault between Monsieur de Saint-George and Mademoiselle D’Eon, the latter though encumbered, as she humorously declared herself, with three petticoats, that suited her sex much better than her spirit, not only parried skilfully all the thrusts of her powerful antagonist, but even touched him by what is termed a *coup de temps*, which all his dexterity could not ward off. We hear that a celebrated painter has undertaken to hit off the semblance and attitude of the hero and heroine in this very interesting scene.<sup>1</sup> Mademoiselle D’Eon had modesty enough, on her hitting Monsieur de Saint-George, to set it down to his complaisance; but the latter candidly declared that he had done all in his power to ward against it. A gentleman present assures us that nothing could equal the quickness of the repartee, especially considering that the modern Pallas is nearly in her sixtieth year, and had to cope with a young man equally skilful and vigorous.’

Upon another occasion of the Chevalière’s appearing before the Prince of Wales, this time at the King’s Theatre, she was dressed in armour, with a casque and feather, representing Minerva or the Maid of Orleans.<sup>2</sup>

When Mr. Angelo died near Eton, in 1801, D’Eon deplored the loss of one of her oldest and best friends,

<sup>1</sup> Robineau, a French artist, executed a painting on this subject, from which a print was published.

<sup>2</sup> Ch. MSS. Old newspapers.

for they had known each other fifty-five (*sic*) years, and she was indebted to him for many acts of kindness. The Chevalière, Wilkes, and the elder Sheridan were frequent guests at Angelo's table, in his house in Carlisle Street, Soho Square, where they often sat for hours over the bottle, in lengthened arguments upon the politics of the day. D'Eon was Angelo's most constant guest and bosom friend, staying at his house sometimes for weeks, and materially assisted him in his Treatise on Fencing. It was there that old Hone and Cosway met her. She had experienced the greatest pleasure in teaching young Angelo how to handle a foil, until at last they became strong antagonists, the latter, after reaching manhood, often taking much pains to put her out of humour. Speaking of her as a *maître d'armes*, Angelo found that *he* was violent and *bien opiniâtre*, though by no means a *ferrailleur*. Whatever *he* executed was correct and scientific.

Other announcements in the papers of the day show how the Chevalière turned to equally good account her skill in chess.

#### MADAME LA CHEVALIÈRE D'EON.

##### CHESS CLUB, PARSLÖE'S HOUSE, ST. JAMES' STREET.

This day, at two o'clock precisely, Mr. Phillidor will play three games at once against three good chess-players, two of them without seeing the boards, and the third on looking over the table. He most respectfully invites the members of the chess-club to honour him with their presence. Ladies and gentlemen who are not members of this club may be provided with tickets at five shillings each at the above-mentioned house to see the match. Madame la Chevalière D'Eon will be one of Mr. Phillidor's adversaries.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> D'Eon played Mr. Phillidor at another great match on April 13, 1793.

In 1788, when the country was sorrowing at symptoms of aberration in George III., the Chevalière issued an 'Epître aux Anglais dans leurs tristes circonstances présentes' (8vo. 48 pp.), complimentary to the Prince of Wales, which was well received and quickly reached a second edition.

We pass over the intermediate years until 1791, when the Chevalière burst upon London with the sudden announcement that her precious books and MSS. were about to be sold by public auction. The catalogue, prepared by herself, opens with an address to the Public,<sup>1</sup> in which are given the reasons which place her under the necessity of disposing, during her lifetime, of all she possesses. She had returned to London in 1785 for no other purpose than that of paying her creditors and collecting what was due to her, but she had been unable to succeed in this double object of her wishes. The reigning King of France, she went on to say, sensible of her military and political services, as well as of her innocence and the misfortunes she had experienced, had generously caused to be remitted to Washington, Earl Ferrers, through M. de Beaumarchais, on October 17, 1778, the sum of 5,000*l.* sterling, to be employed by the said Earl Ferrers, according to his promise, towards the discharge of her debts, so that she might be in a position to leave England honourably. Notwithstanding, however, the

Phillidor, a composer of music, was one of the greatest chess players who ever lived, and founder of a school which has proved itself second to none. He died almost literally in a garret. He was the author of a *Treatise on Chess*, 1749.

<sup>1</sup> To the Public. An Historical Account of the Facts, Motives, and Reasons which lay Mademoiselle la Chevalière D'Eon under the necessity of making, in her life-time, a public sale of all she possesses in London, *in order to satisfy and pay her creditors, before her departure for Paris. Justitiz Soror Fides!*

# CATALOGUE

OF THE

## SCARCE BOOKS

AND

## VALUABLE MANUSCRIPTS

OF

### THE CHEVALIÈRE D'EON,

formerly

MINISTER PLENIPOTENTIARY from *France to England*  
at the Peace of 1763, &c. &c.

Who is about to quit LONDON, and to return to PARIS,  
containing

A great number of curious MANUSCRIPTS, both Ancient and Modern, and a very large Collection of DICTIONARIES and FRENCH BOOKS, and many in the GREEK, LATIN, and ENGLISH, and also in the ORIENTAL Languages, collected by herself, in the course of her Travels.

Which will be publicly sold by AUCTION,

BY MR. CHRISTIE,

At his GREAT ROOM in PALL MALL, on Thursday, the 5th of May, and following days, 1791.<sup>1</sup>

At the same time will be sold her MAHOGANY BOOK CASES, her PRINTS, HOUSEHOLD FURNITURE, SWORDS, TRINKETS, JEWELS, and, in general, all her WEARING APPAREL, constituting the WARDROBE of a CAPTAIN of DRAGOONS and a FRENCH LADY.

Quale decus rerum, si Virginis AUCTIO fiat,  
Baltens, et Manicæ, et Cristæ, Crurisque sinistri  
Dimidium Tegmen! . . . . .  
. . . . . Tu felix, Ocreas vendente Puella.—JUV.

N.B.—Mr. CHRISTIE assures the Public that the name of the Chevalière D'Eon is written with her own hand, in the first page of every one of her Books; and that the Preface to the Catalogue of them contains AN INTERESTING NARRATIVE OF THE VERY EXTRAORDINARY CASE OF Mdlle. D'Eon. The Catalogue has been divided into Six different Parts, to facilitate the transport of it into Foreign Countries: they are now united in one catalogue.

Price ONE SHILLING.

CATALOGUES may be had at the Place of Sale; at Mr. DEBRET's, *Piccadilly*; at Mr. SEWELL's, in *Cornhill*; and at M. DE BOFFE's, *Gerard Street*.

Printed by T. SPILSBURY & SON, No. 57, *Snow Hill, London*.  
M.DCC.XCI.

<sup>1</sup> This sale was held on May 24, 1793.

earl's honour and probity, and his friendship for the Chevalière, he discharged a part only of her debts, and without first asking her consent, kept 3,000*l.* for his own private use, undoubtedly with the intention of returning the money, D'Eon having asked him to settle with her creditors, and especially with Mr. Duval, the King's jeweller, who had advanced several sums during the Chevalière's law-suits and distresses in London. Being urged to satisfy these claims, his lordship acknowledged that he had applied 3,000*l.* towards completing the furniture of his seat,<sup>1</sup> the working of a lead-mine, and of a lime-pit in his park of Staunton Harold, which had since produced an income of 600*l.* Being dissatisfied with this employment of her money, D'Eon wrote from London to entreat that upon his lordship's return to town, he would afford to herself and to her creditors some security for the speedy reimbursement of the money. Lord Ferrers replied in three separate letters.

'Staunton Harold, December 24, 1775.

'I have so much business to settle here that if I am not obliged to go to London on account of the Duchess of Kingston's trial,<sup>2</sup> I think I shall not come there before the month of May; and it being requisite for you to have some voucher to produce for the money you have in my hands, in case anything should happen to me, you will be pleased to let me know your Christian name, in order that I may send you by the stage a bond for the sum due to you, which bond will bear an interest of five per cent. And having been disappointed with respect to a sum of money which was to be paid to me last month for an estate sold for the purpose of settling my affairs, I should take it as a particular favour of you to leave this money in my hands for one year at the above-mentioned interest. It is all the same to

<sup>1</sup> Earl Ferrers had rebuilt the mansion of Staunton Harold according to a plan of his own, and lived to see it nearly finished.

<sup>2</sup> This lady was put upon her trial for bigamy.

me, as I receive of others the same interest I pay you. Should you in the interim want any money for the settlement of your affairs, you may draw on me whenever you please, which indeed seems to me to be much better than to remit you at present in bank notes, for reasons which I once told you. The gout has left me; I find myself, thank God, very well, and am,

‘Your sincere and very affectionate,  
‘FERRERS.’

‘. . . You inform me of your coming here very soon; as you know that I shall always be happy to see you, there is no occasion for me to say anything on that subject. . . . Newcomb<sup>1</sup> is at present in Derby, and had some time ago the misfortune of breaking his arm. . . . This has prevented me from sending you the hundred guineas you want for the present, but shall remit you this sum in the course of next week. I have at present no money in the hands of my bankers in London, having withdrawn the same from them to have here a ready supply of cash for the mine, which proves already richer than I expected. . . . Having no furnace built, I cannot yet make money of it. This has rendered me very poor at present, that is to say, until the time when I shall receive my rents. . . . Farewell, and be assured of my being your sincere friend,

‘FERRERS.’

‘. . . Since the time I had the honour of seeing you last, I have been very ill, the gout having attacked my lungs so seriously that I did not know what to think of it. I have by this time deposited the bond of 3,000*l.* with Mr. Woty<sup>2</sup> for you, in case I should die. It has been ready this great while, and is dated December 26, 1775, bearing interest of five per cent. for that time. . . . If the gout permits I shall in a month be in London. . . . Assuring you that I am,

‘Your very faithful,  
‘FERRERS.’

Alarmed at this intelligence, D'Eon repaired to the

<sup>1</sup> His lordship's superintendent.

<sup>2</sup> His lordship's secretary, residing at Loughborough.



seat of his lordship,<sup>1</sup> who, fearing he should die, had signed a bond at five per cent. interest, payable at the expiration of five years instead of one year, as he had promised. D'Eon was not greatly pleased at this fresh delay, but finding there was no alternative, she accepted this bond, dated December 26, 1775, and payable in 1780, and transferred it, jointly with Lord Ferrers, to Mr. John Duval, on August 11, 1777, as security for the Chevalière's debt to him, Lord Ferrers binding himself, verbally also, to be punctual to his engagement.

*Earl Ferrers' Bond.*

' Know all men by these presents, that I, the Right Honourable Washington, Earl Ferrers, am held and firmly bound to Charles Genovesa Louisa Augusta Andrea Timothea D'Eon de Beaumont, Knight of the Royal and Military Order of Saint Louis, now of Brewer's Street, Golden Square, in the County of Middlesex, in the penal sum of Six Thousand Pounds, of good and lawful money of Great Britain, to be paid to the said Charles Genovesa Louisa Augusta Andrea Timothea D'Eon de Beaumont, or his certain Attorney, Executors, Administrators, or Assigns. For which payment to be well and faithfully made, I bind myself, my Heirs, Executors, and Administrators, firmly by these presents. Sealed with my Seal; dated this twenty-sixth day of December, in the sixteenth year of the reign of our Sovereign Lord George the Third, by the Grace of God of Great Britain, France, and Ireland, King, Defender of the Faith, and so forth; and in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and seventy-five.

' The condition of this obligation is such, that if the above bounden Washington, Earl Ferrers, his Heirs, Executors, and Administrators, shall and do well and truly pay or cause to be paid to the said Charles Genovesa Louisa Augusta Andrea Timothea D'Eon de Beaumont, his certain Attorney, Executors, Administrators, or Assigns, the full sum of Three Thousand Pounds, of good and lawful money of Great Britain, on or

<sup>1</sup> See p. 262.

before the twenty-sixth day of December, which will be in the year of our Lord, one thousand seven hundred and eighty, with interest for the same after the rate of five pounds *per centum*, per annum, then this obligation to be void, or else to remain in full force.

L.S.

‘(Signed)

‘FERRERS.’

‘Sealed and delivered (being first duly stamped) in the presence of

‘(Signed)

‘W. WOTY.

‘(Signed)

‘JOHN NEWCOMB.’

‘Passed by order of Mr. John Duval and Son, at London, August 11, 1777.

‘(Signed)

‘THE CHEVALIER D'EON.’

Relying upon his lordship's honour and Mr. Duval's probity, D'Eon left London for France with her mind quite at ease. The following year Lord Ferrers died, as did also Mr. Duval. It was impossible for D'Eon to return to England to obtain payment of the bond and reimburse the heirs of Mr. Duval, the King's ministers having ordered his detention in France, and it was not until 1785 that she was able to attend to the affair in person. Being then again in England, she prevailed upon a common friend to treat with Robert, Earl Ferrers, brother and heir to the late earl, to obtain payment, but finding that his lordship only wished to gain time and keep her out of her money, she was obliged to bring an action against him in the Court of Common Pleas at Westminster, which she gained, on February 6, 1787, the funds for conducting the prosecution having been supplied by Lord Tamworth, in entire disapproval of his father's conduct. Two months later this earl, who, according to Walpole, ‘deserved

his ancient honours,' died, referring to which event a daily paper observed :—

'The death of Lord Ferrers, announced in the papers a few days ago, will, in all likelihood, prove an unfortunate event for the Chevalier D'Eon. The principal object of her return to England was to solicit the payment of four thousand pounds, deposited, by order of the present King of France, in the hands of the late Earl Ferrers to pay the debts of the Chevalière, which hath not been effected to this day. The son, Lord Tamworth, now Earl of Ferrers, who, to his honour be it said, highly blamed the legal contestation maintained on this subject by his late father, will, by putting an end to all further delay, derive great credit from this act of justice in favour of so extraordinary a character, whose concerns cannot but be warmly espoused by all who are acquainted with her, and the sufferings she has undergone, after having fought the battles of her country, and managed its interests as an able negotiator.'<sup>1</sup>

The will of the late earl contained directions that all his late brother's and his own debts should be paid, and although the new earl, as Lord Tamworth, had befriended D'Eon and made handsome promises, he no longer thought it his duty, after succeeding to the title, to discharge the debt of honour. It should be stated that the only sums received by the Chevalière from the day that Washington, Earl Ferrers, had appropriated the 3,000*l.* in 1775, to the year 1791, amounted to 150*l.*, paid in three instalments of 50*l.* each, between April 21 and November 26, 1776. After her return from France, she endeavoured to recover her money or the interest due; but all was in vain, and being determined that her creditors should not be the sufferers, she felt obliged to offer even her beloved library for sale, resolved 'to carry nothing with her out of the island but her integrity and her regret at leaving it.'

<sup>1</sup> *Morning Post*, April 23—27, 1787.

It is impossible not to feel some sympathy for the unfortunate Chevalière in this ignoble treatment by a succession of British peers, with all of whom she had long been on terms of intimate friendship, even though the moral to be deduced by the circumstances is, that the would-be biter herself became the bitten one ! Turning back a few pages to the time when Beaumarchais was conducting the mission entrusted to him by Louis XVI., Lord Ferrers appears as a creditor of D'Eon for 5,000*l.*, and as if to give colour to the claim, it was represented by the supposed creditor and debtor that the iron safe filled with important documents had been deposited with the English nobleman in security for the debt, a story that cannot be regarded otherwise than as a pure invention. It is clear enough that in her anxiety to secure a sufficiently large advance out of the funds supplied by the King, who was fully disposed to liberality, but with which Beaumarchais was most unwilling to part, D'Eon had secured the earl's sanction to the entry, in her list of liabilities, of this imaginary debt. Never for a moment doubting the genuineness of the claim after his first suspicions had been removed, or suspecting complicity in any kind of deception, Beaumarchais paid the money, but instead of immediately passing on the whole to D'Eon's creditors, as he had promised to do, his lordship boldly retained 3,000*l.* for his own use and benefit, in the conviction that the Chevalière would be in no hurry to expose her own share in the double dealing, by publicly resenting the breach of trust of which he had been guilty. The Chevalière discovered, but too late, the blunder she had committed in trusting to her would-be friend, and submitted tamely enough to the earl's shameless and unfeeling settlement, by which she was required to

wait five years for her little capital, and not one year as originally convened.

The breach of trust became something worse as years rolled by, and none of Washington, Earl Ferrers' successors, after having adorned themselves with the coronet, cared to recognise their obligation towards the needy and ill-used knight. D'Eon had awaited the pleasure of the several earls during fifteen years, before making the fearless exposure of their conduct and giving public expression to her feelings thereon, in the preface to her catalogue. When bitterly tried, a decade later, by fresh reverses of fortune, she renewed her efforts (October 1802) to recover what was her own, this time through Admiral Shirley, a brother of the deceased earl, Washington. She sent to him a copy of the bond, a calculation of the interest due on her capital of 3,000*l.* during twenty-seven years, and a proposal for the final adjustment of the affair. The encumbered condition of the Ferrers' estates would have rendered nugatory any further promises, even if any such had been held out to the Chevalière, who reduced her demands to a minimum by asking for 500*l.* wherewith to pay pressing calls, and a yearly allowance of 100*l.* for the remainder of her days, no great exaction, seeing that she was then in her seventy-fifth year! Upon these conditions she was prepared to surrender the bond to the admiral, to be disposed of as he might think proper. It does not appear what notice was taken of this proposition by the deceased earl's brother, but it is very certain that so late as January 1805, the Chevalière had not received one farthing from the Ferrers family!<sup>1</sup>

Scarcely had the distribution of D'Eon's Catalogue

<sup>1</sup> Ch. MSS.

taken place, than sympathising friends made up a purse to meet her immediate necessities; a subscription list was opened at Mr. Hammersley's, the banker, Pall Mall, where, in a very short time, the sum of 465*l.* 5*s.* was collected, 100*l.* being a contribution from the Prince of Wales. Another expression of feeling was a public entertainment given for D'Eon's benefit, on June 29, 1791, by the managers of Ranelagh,<sup>1</sup> 'in consideration of her having been deprived of a considerable part of her fortune by the odious detention of a deposit.'

The troubles with which France was being agitated found an echo in the heart of the unfortunate Chevalière. The news of the King's flight, and the abolition of all orders of chivalry by the National Assembly, she received as sure warnings of coming distress to herself; and when the Legislative Assembly summoned all emigrants to make their appearance in France by a certain date, under pain of death if they disregarded the decree, she quickly made up her mind to obey the national will and return to her country. In the midst of her many apprehensions there seemed to be one gleam of comfort—for she became persuaded that the hour was at hand when she should be liberated from her state of womanhood. The sale of some of her property took place on February 17, 1792, when were disposed of at Mr. Christie's, in Pall Mall, seventy-three lots of 'valuable and elegant jewels, a few fine prints, valuable coins, medals, plate, &c., the property of Mademoiselle the Chevalière D'Eon,' which realised the sum of 348*l.* 17*s.* 7*d.*, some of the more valuable lots having been bought in.

<sup>1</sup> 'I am a great friend to these public amusements, sir,' said Dr. Johnson, (who often went to Ranelagh, which he deemed a place of innocent recreation) to Boswell; 'they keep people from vice.' And a few years later we read of Walpole's four nieces being at Ranelagh the night of the Gordon riots, together with the Duke of Gloucester.

The latter included—

A pair of single drop brilliant earrings of *singular beauty, colour and perfection*, 155*l.*

A diamond cross and chain, *the stones of matchless beauty and perfection*, 110*l.*

A pair of single drop brilliant earrings, 109 guineas.

A tortoise-shell lined snuff-box mounted in gold with miniature, and cypher on the reverse side (the gift of the Empress Elizabeth), 2½ guineas.

The personal ornaments sold comprised five pairs of gold drops, one pair in brilliants; eleven pairs of earrings, one pair in brilliants and one pair in roses; two crosses, one being in diamonds, with chain; five necklaces; one bracelet with miniature of the Chevalière in military uniform; two hoop brilliant rings; three watches, one being set in brilliants.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Catalogue of sale.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

D'Eon (*la citoyenne Geneviève*) offers her services to the Legislative Assembly—Is ordered to join General Dumouriez—Detained in England—Her English friends—Fences in public—Is seriously wounded—Distressing times—Last days—Death—Autopsy and appearance of the body—Administration of property—General character—Pursuits and habits late in life—Maxims on religion—Coldness of temperament—Reflections—Fugitive pieces.

HAVING satisfied some of her creditors with the proceeds of the sale, D'Eon occupied herself in packing the remainder of her effects in fifteen cases for conveyance to France. War had been declared, and the Citoyenne Geneviève at once sent her nephew O'Gorman to Paris, with the offers of her services in the form of a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly, an extract from which was read at a sitting of that body. It stated that although she had worn the dress of a woman for fifteen years, she had never forgotten that she was formerly a soldier; that since the Revolution she felt her military ardour revive, and demanded, instead of her cap and petticoats, her helmet, sabre, horse, and the rank in the army to which her seniority, her services, and her wounds entitled her; and she also requested permission to raise a legion of volunteers. Unconnected with any party, she had no desire to brandish her sword in procession in the streets of Paris, and wished for nothing but actual service—war nobly made and courageously supported.



'In my eager impatience,' she continued, 'I have sold everything but my uniform, and the sword I wore in the last war, which I wish again to wear in the present. Of my library nothing remains but the shelves,<sup>1</sup> and the MSS. of Marshal Vauban, which I have preserved as an offering to the National Assembly, for the glory of my country, and the instruction of the brave generals employed in her defence. I have been the sport of nature, of fortune, of war, of peace, of men and women, of the malice and intrigue of Courts. I have passed successively from the state of a girl to that of a boy, from the state of a man to that of a woman. I have experienced the strange vicissitudes of human life. Soon, I hope, with arms in my hand, I shall fly on the wings of liberty and victory to fight and die for the nation, the law, and the King.'

This petition, the reading of which was interrupted by repeated bursts of applause, was ordered to be honourably mentioned in the minutes, and referred to the military committee.<sup>2</sup>

Early in the following year the Citoyenne Geneviève, in a transport of delight, informed her friend, M. Beauvais,<sup>3</sup> that in consequence of instructions received from the Minister of War for the Republic of France, she was about to proceed to Paris, thence to join the army of General Dumouriez,<sup>4</sup> and begged leave to forward to his care six cases for despatch to France, *vid* Rouen or Havre de Grace, as she might determine after her arrival in that country. Nine other cases were at the same time sent to Mr. Christie, who had promised to

<sup>1</sup> By a strange contradiction, D'Eon purchased later in the year, at Christie's rooms, the Mead and Douglas collections of Horace in 8vo, 4to, and folio; for which she paid 100*l.*, having herself assisted in the preparation of the catalogue.

<sup>2</sup> *Scots Magazine*, vol. liv. *Gentleman's Magazine*, vol. lxii.

<sup>3</sup> M. Beauvais, *père*, Jermyn Street, January 12, 1793. Ch. MSS.

<sup>4</sup> Beaten at Nerwinde, on March 18. It was said of this general under the Republic: 'Qu'il cherchait à sauver sa tête en négociant au dehors avec le Général Cobourg, et dedans avec la faction d'Orléans.'

find room for them. She was also invited by the ladies of Paris to return to them, the invitation, dated in the month of April, having been entrusted for personal delivery to her old friend, Captain Arden, of the Royal Navy. The Chevalière did not return to France, having been detained in all probability by her creditors, who would have acted with greater wisdom and profit to themselves had they trusted to her honour, and left her free to seek for better days under the changed fortunes of her country. It was doubtlessly her late surrender of State papers, and the nature of their contents,<sup>1</sup> that had influenced the administrators of the Republic in her favour; but her right to a pension was no longer recognised under the new form of Government in France, her property had been confiscated, and she was thus left without resources of any description, now verging on her sixty-fifth year. The Chevalière appears to have existed at this time chiefly upon the hospitality of her friends, there being amongst those who entertained her more frequently the names of Lady Constable, Mr. Christie, Lord and Lady Glencairn, Lady Wallis (sister to the Duchess of Gordon), Colonel and Mrs. Kemys-Tynte, General Melville, General Rainsford, at whose house she met Horne Tooke and Paine; Mr. Fitzmaurice (brother of Lord Lansdowne), Colonel Macbean, of the Artillery; Mr. Lockhart, banker, Pall Mall; Mr. Dent, banker, Clarges Street; Sir William Ffloyd, Count Zenobio, envoy from Venice; Colonel du Bathe, M. Hirsinger, Chargé d'Affaires from France, &c. &c.

By the end of the year 1792 the Chevalière's remaining means and credit were completely exhausted, and there was no alternative but to make public exhi-

<sup>1</sup> See Note, p. 204.

bition of her pre-eminent skill in fencing, a resolution in which she appears to have been supported by Mrs. Bateman, the noted actress and female fencer. Her first appearance, in a series of performances, was at a *déjeuner* given by Mrs. Bateman in her house, Soho Square, to a party of English and French officers of both services, several 'literary characters, and gentlemen of first-rate stage talents,' upon which occasion, as announced in the papers,

'Sir George Kelly pushed *carte* and *tierce* with Mademoiselle D'Eon to the great entertainment of the company. An assault between Captain Walmsley and Mademoiselle D'Eon concluded this scientific display, and it was astonishing to observe with what vigour the captain's repeated thrusts were repulsed. The assault lasted nearly fifteen minutes, during which time Mademoiselle D'Eon did not appear to be out of breath; she only once exclaimed, "*Ah! mes jambes!*" which was when the conflict had subsided. This celebrated character cannot be termed *Madame Egalité*, for in this, as in any other country, she has not her equal.'<sup>1</sup>

*January 22.*—She was next invited to an *Assaut d'armes* with Captain Walmsley, at Mr. Towneley's house in Devonshire Place, when one hundred guests were present, nearly all of whom were Roman Catholics.

*February 11.*—Fenced Captain Walmsley at the Club d'Armes, Brewer Street, and although very much indisposed, astonished numerous spectators with her science and activity. The captain was foiled four or five times successively, and it was not till the female Chevalier was nearly exhausted that he had the opportunity of a retort. Confident of success, Mademoiselle D'Eon refused the mask, of which her opponent availed himself.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Old newspapers.

*May 30.*—Fences at the Haymarket on Mrs. Bateman's benefit night. Never, since the death of Garrick, had the house been so full.

*June 26.*—Fences at the Ranelagh, in the presence of the Prince of Wales and Duke of Gloucester.

*August 23.*—Fences with Mr. Bateman and his son.

*September.*—Fences with Mrs. Bateman and an English officer, under the patronage of the Prince of Wales, who sat in the stage box (Brighton theatre) with Mrs. Fitzherbert and Miss Piggot.

*October 19.*—Fences at her own benefit in the theatre, Margate, a prologue being spoken by Mrs. Bateman.

*November 2.*—Fences at the Assembly Rooms, Deal.

*November 11 and 21.*—Fences at the theatre, Dover.

*November 30.*—Fences at the Fountain Inn, Canterbury.

After which, Mrs. Bateman<sup>1</sup> and the Chevalière, who had been on a professional tour together, returned to London.

In the Chevalière's journals, from which the above dates are taken,<sup>2</sup> there appear two entries only during the year 1794 of her having publicly exhibited—at Ranelagh on May 26, and at the Brighton theatre on August 8. In 1795, she fenced at the Lower Rooms (Bath ?) on April 24, at Birmingham on July 6, and at Worcester on August 13. In January 1796, she per-

<sup>1</sup> John Taylor freely expresses it as his opinion that D'Eon disgraced *his* character by exhibiting *himself* with Mrs. Bateman in fencing matches at several provincial towns. In March 1794, D'Eon wrote to ask Warren Hastings, with whom he was well acquainted, for a letter of introduction to Mr. Peter Speke, of the Supreme Council at Calcutta, in behalf of the Batemans, who were proceeding to India to claim some property. After Mr. Bateman's death, his widow was married to Mr. Ester, and died at Calcutta in 1801.

<sup>2</sup> B.M. MSS.

formed in the Lower Rooms, Bath, under the patronage of the colonel and officers of the Essex Dragoons, whose band was in attendance, Bath still being what it had been for many years, incomparably the most fashionable and favourite watering-place in England, and frequented by people of all classes of society. After giving four performances, D'Eon travelled to Oxford for April 22 and three other evenings, thence to Southampton to keep an engagement on August 26, when an unlucky accident brought to an end, for ever, these exhibitions of her skill.

In receiving a thrust from her adversary that evening, the foil broke off, inflicting a serious wound, by which she was completely disabled. It is well to reproduce her address to the public upon that occasion, and the surgical certificate given to satisfy that public; the first, because it so very clearly, and in her own words, exposes her sad necessities; the second, because it is evident that the physician and surgeons who examined the wound were satisfied with regard to the sex of their patient.

‘ Mademoiselle D'Eon takes this Opportunity of returning her sincerest and respectful Thanks to the Benevolent Gentry of the Town and Neighbourhood, for having honoured her with their Presence at her late GRAND ASSAULT D'ARMES; and also for the kind Interest they were so good as to take in the dangerous Wound she received that Day. Alas! She is now obliged to *cut her Bread with her Sword*; which is indeed to her a Bread full of Repugnancy and Bitterness, that Necessity alone can make her swallow. But preferring that Shift so unfit for her sex, and so against her Feelings, at the Age of Sixty-nine, to a State of Dependence, whilst she has Strength to hold a Sword she is forced to make it useful, to the Support of an unhappy and injured Woman; bathed, as it often may be with Truth said, with her Tears. Her Misfortunes began with her Birth, and are

only likely to end with her Life. The Friends Prosperity had given her, Adversity has deprived her of.'

*'WE CERTIFY, that having been present at a Grand Assault d'Armes, or Fencing-Match, exhibited by Mademoiselle D'Eon in public, on Friday, August 26, at the Long Rooms, Southampton, we witnessed her receiving a dangerous Thrust from the Foil of her Antagonist, the Button having broken off, unperceived, about an Inch from the Extremity. On Examination, the Wound was found to be situated in the Arm-pit, on the Right Side, extending itself laterally about four Inches. The muscular Irritation, in Consequence of this Accident, occasioned intense Pain for some Days, which she sustained with the utmost Fortitude, Patience, and Resignation.'*

*'J. MACKIE, M.D.*

*'P. BERNARD. } Surgeons.'*

*'H. CORBIN. }*

*'Southampton, September 6, 1796.'*

D'Eon had to keep her bed for four months, and after being removed to London was confined, through great debility, to the house, which she left four times only during the next four years, and then only in a coach. She spent her long convalescence with Mrs. Mary Cole<sup>2</sup> at her own invitation, an old friend from whom she never again parted, and these two thereafter shared alike in each other's sorrows, for of joys they had none! 'My life was spent in eating, drinking, and sleeping, praying, writing, and at work with Mrs. Cole, repairing linen, gowns, and head-dresses.'

The Chevalière was in the habit of pawning her diamonds from time to time when hard pressed, taking

<sup>1</sup> D'Eon Papers. B.M.

<sup>2</sup> Mrs. Cole, a native of Lorraine, born in the same year as D'Eon, was the widow of Mr. W. Cole, pump maker to the Royal Navy, and an ingenious inventor. She had long been on intimate terms of friendship with Mrs. Robinson, of Denston Hall, Suffolk, the daughter of Lord Clive.

care to redeem and keep them in reserve until she could dispose of them at a fair price. In 1799, being absolutely obliged to part with those jewels, after failing to treat with Rundell and his friend Sharp, the well-known jewellers, she made some satisfactory arrangement with a Mr. Moses, who called to see them. After this, it may be said that D'Eon lived entirely upon charity. Forced to give up the chambers she had occupied in Brewer Street during thirty-three years, she went to stay for a time with Colonel Thornton, on the Surrey side of the Thames, and then took up her residence permanently with Mrs. Cole, first at 33 Westminster Bridge Road, then at 5 Mead's Place, opposite to the Apollo Gardens, and near the Asylum, Lambeth, and finally at 26 New Milman Street, Foundling Hospital. Her two nephews, Major O'Gorman, and Captain Augustus O'Gorman of the 18th regiment of foot, called to see her occasionally, but it does not appear that they ever afforded any relief or comfort to their aged aunt, who had been in the habit of assisting them very materially in their younger days.

D'Eon had never abandoned the idea of possibly returning to France, the Treaty of Amiens and the First Consulate seeming to afford a glimmer of hope. She had made some kind of declaration before M. Otto, the French minister plenipotentiary, on the 7th Fructidor (August 24), 1802, which resulted in her being supplied with a passport to Paris and Tonnerre, good for three decades (thirty days), dated the 25th Brumaire (November 15) of the same year, and she received five pounds from Mr. R. Slade 'to enable her to return to her country;' but she remained hopelessly involved, as appears from several touching entries in her notebook, of which we quote two. M. Blacher, the

exiled *curé* of St. Martin le Gérard in the diocese of Constance, called at the house of the sheriff's officer for Surrey, on November 15, 1804, and inquired if it was true that Mademoiselle D'Eon was in detention. Upon learning that she had been in custody five months, and only just set at liberty, the *curé* asked to see her, and being shown into the Chevalière's chamber, said that he had come at the instance of an English lady to know the particulars of her arrest. On taking his leave, and pleading that he also was an exile and poor, he quietly placed on the table a gold seven-shilling piece which he refused to take up again, although pressed to do so by D'Eon. Acknowledging the receipt of ten guineas from the Marchioness Townshend, D'Eon wrote, July 18, 1805 :—

‘This relief is a gift from Heaven which comes to me at the right moment, in the sorrow of my great age and of the great revolution that has taken place in my country, and which has, at one blow, swallowed up my little property in Burgundy, and the pensions I had received from Louis XV. and Louis XVI.’

The note was signed : *Chevalier D'Eon, who has not quitted his bed, his room, or his house nine times during the last nine years.*

Writing to Major Clive, M.P.,<sup>1</sup> she complains of her reduced circumstances, and of having lost her all by the French Revolution, she cannot say, why?

‘It is a secret hidden, I will not say in the womb of Providence, but in the foolishness of the French, who, like weather-cocks, turn to every wind.’<sup>2</sup>

Amongst those who occasionally supplied her with funds, or whose attentions the Chevalière more par-

<sup>1</sup> D'Eon had sold to Major Clive, in 1794, Marshal Saxe's sword, a huge sabre and a large carbine, for which she received sixty pounds.

<sup>2</sup> B.M. MSS.



ticularly appreciated, were Mrs. Crawford, of Hertford Street, Mayfair, a daughter of Mrs. Holland; the Misses Dodwell; Mrs. Tryon, of Glaston, Uppingham; Colonel Kemys-Tynte; and Miss Shirley, a natural daughter of Admiral Shirley. The good Queen Charlotte had never forgotten her, and she enjoyed an annuity of fifty pounds from the Duke of Queensberry.

For the two last years of her life, D'Eon was almost bed-ridden through infirmity, but affectionately nursed and tended by Mrs. Cole. About a year before her death she sent for Père Elisée, formerly surgeon to the 'Pères de la Charité' at Grenoble, who was enjoying a comfortable allowance from the Duke of Queensberry as his grace's physician, and with whom he dined almost daily.<sup>1</sup> Elisée and Dr. Perigalese attended her as her strength failed from day to day, and until she quietly expired at 10 P.M. of May 21, 1810.

When the last offices were being performed to the remains of her deceased friend, Mrs. Cole learnt for the first time, and to her utter astonishment, that her late most intimate companion was a man. Upon making his appearance the following morning, Père Elisée equally expressed his great surprise, and at once recommended the expediency of the Chevalier's sex being professionally determined; the body was accordingly dissected in the presence of several medical gentlemen, the Earl of Yarborough, Sir Sidney Smith, the Honourable Mr. Lyttleton, Mr. Douglas, and other persons of consideration, the following certificate being forthwith made public:—

'I hereby certify that I have inspected and dissected the body of the Chevalier D'Eon, in the presence of Mr. Adair, Mr.

<sup>1</sup> Ch. MSS.

Wilson, and Le Père Elisée, and have found the male organs in every respect perfectly formed.<sup>1</sup>

‘(Signed)      ‘T. COPELAND,  
   ‘Surgeon,  
   ‘Golden Square.’

‘May 23, 1810.’

In the Slade collection of autograph papers at the British Museum is preserved this letter:—

‘My dear Sir,—Introduced by a friend of the late Chevalier D'Eon, I attended in the evening of yesterday at lodgings in two pair of stairs at No. 26 New Milman Street, Foundling Hospital, and being permitted to inspect the corpse, can assure you that the late Chevalier, called when living, Mademoiselle D'Eon, had the visible organs of generation of a male, and was a very man. Mrs. Cole, with whom he lived for many years, being as well as the Chevalier aged above eighty, assured me that it was with the utmost astonishment that she received the information, just after her companion's death, that he, a Mademoiselle D'Eon as she called him, was discovered to be as I saw him—a man—that she did not recover the shock for many hours. The above, being interesting to you, as you can have no doubt of its authenticity, I have sent in writing. The Prince de Conti, &c. &c. had attended on the same day at the lodgings.

‘Yours very truly,  
   ‘GEO. SLK,  
   ‘Notary Public.’

‘Doctors' Commons, May 27, 1810.  
‘Robert Slade, Esq.’

The body was privately interred in the churchyard of St. Pancras on the morning of May 28, the coffin being inscribed, ‘Charles Geneviève Louis Auguste André Timothée D'Eon de Beaumont. Né 17 Octobre, 1727, mort 21 Mai, 1810.’

Before the devastating spade and shovel of the Midland Railway Company had commenced its work in

<sup>1</sup> *The Times*, May 25, 1810.

1868, to make a cutting through the churchyard at St. Pancras, a slab, *in situ*, was to be seen bearing this inscription :

CHARLES GENEVIEVE LOUISE AUGUSTE ANDRE  
TIMOTHEE D'EON DE BEAUMONT,  
DIED, MAY 21; BURIED, MAY 28, 1810,  
AGED 83 YEARS.<sup>1</sup>

but, like numerous other monuments, it has disappeared,<sup>2</sup> 'and the place thereof shall know it no more.'

A cast was taken after death, of which an engraving was made, and a tinted engraving of the *torso*, from a drawing by C. Turner, was also published, with the surgical attestation as to sex. The body presented unusual roundness in the formation of limbs; the appearance of a beard was very slight, and hair of so light a colour as to be scarcely perceptible on the arms, legs, and chest. The throat was by no means masculine; shoulders square and good; breast remarkably full; arms, hands, and fingers, those of a stout female; hips very small, and legs and feet corresponding with arms.

So early as 1763, D'Eon had a tendency to being round-shouldered, a deformity induced by much sedentary work, but that did not greatly increase with years, or interfere with his carriage, which was good. The

<sup>1</sup> See Cansick's interesting and painstaking work, *A Collection of curious and interesting Epitaphs . . . in the Ancient Church and Burial Grounds of St. Pancras*. London, 1869. 'It is lamentable,' says the author, 'to see the dilapidated state of the monuments in this ground, belonging to wealthy and well-known families, which for a few pounds might be restored and made a credit to the churchyard.'

<sup>2</sup> The Baroness Burdett-Coutts who is here, there, and everywhere in the practice of benevolence, not unmindful of the desecration to which the remains of the illustrious dead had been subjected, caused to be erected at considerable expense, in St. Pancras churchyard, a monument which bears the names of those whose ashes lie scattered about the parish playground.

low body, in red cloth, lined with coarse canvas, of one of the last gowns he wore, exhibits dimensions showing the obesity of his condition at death.

Circumference at the breast	.	.	38 inches.
„ at the waist	.	.	31 „
Depth of centre whalebone in front	.	.	16½ „
„ „ „ at the back,			
„ pierced for lacing	.	.	14 „
Diameter of arm-hole	.	.	9 „

This garment is stiffened with seven whalebones ; three being in front, one upon each side, from arm-pit to waist, and two behind for lacing.<sup>1</sup>

D'Eon left a holograph will of some length, preceded by a preamble, and appointed Sir Sidney Smith to be his executor, but the will was unsigned. The preamble is headed, *Soli Deo Gloria et Honor*, and the testament commencing, *Mors mihi lucrum*, ends with these four lines :—

' Nu du ciel je suis descendu  
Et nu je suis sous cette pierre,  
Donc pour avoir vécu sur terre,  
Je n'ai ni gagné ni perdu.'

The preamble directs :—

' When God will have received my soul, inter my body within the coffin upon which I sleep. There you will find the articles with which I wish to be buried, viz., a large woollen blanket in which to wrap me up according to custom in England. If I die in London, bury me at St. Pancras near my cousin D'Eon de Mouloise, who died in 1765 in London, whither he was sent by the late Count de Broglio to watch over my person and papers. If I die in Switzerland, I desire to be buried in the garden of the Hermitage at Friburg. If I die in Paris, I desire to be buried in the cemetery of the old church of St. Geneviève, my patroness. If I die at Tonnerre, I desire to

<sup>1</sup> In the possession of Mr. Christie.

be buried in my mother's grave. Being in my coffin, place my New Testament near my heart, and between my hands joined together in supplication, my Christ, and my Imitation of Jesus Christ, whom I have so badly imitated.'

After bequeathing his estates (?) at Chambeaudon, Tissey, and at the chapel Flogny, to his native town, Tonnerre, for a certain purpose distinctly specified, he leaves to his three nephews O'Gorman the sum of sixty thousand livres, owed to him by their father, his brother-in-law, the Chevalier O'Gorman.

On August 14, 1811, administration of the goods and chattels (value 300*l*.) of the Chevalier D'Eon, bachelor, deceased, was granted to Thomas William Plummer, Esq., the lawful attorney of Lewis Augustus O'Gorman, residing at Cadiz, the nephew and one of the next of kin of the deceased. The sale of his library, which included five hundred editions of Horace (see note, p. 323), was held at Mr. Christie's rooms on February 19, 1813, the proceeds amounting to 313*l*. This library and his own MSS. included all the Chevalier's possessions. The latter, refused in all probability by Mr. O'Gorman at Cadiz, on account of the expense that would be entailed in their transport, appear to have been divided amongst Père Elisée, Mr. Christie, and others who had most befriended the destitute exile.

What further remains to be said of the Chevalier D'Eon will be briefly and exhaustively done.

Writing to the Bishop de Langres, Seigneur de Montmorin, D'Eon sums up very curtly a sketch of himself:—

'Whatever my troubles, I never despair. I am inflexible in my principles, which I believe to be those of honour and of virtue. As a rule, I submit myself in all things to the will of

God. Summer succeeds winter, night is followed by day, after a storm comes a calm! Of what use would my faith be, did I not live in hope? I will strive to be a man of character, and practise perseverance, and I shall meet with solace in good time.'<sup>1</sup>

Let us now turn to one of his contemporaries and to those personally acquainted with him, and see what they have recorded.

'This ambiguous creature,' says Lacretelle, 'had been by turns and sometimes simultaneously, a diplomatist, student, statesman, juriconsult, and soldier. Few of his contemporaries devoted themselves so much to study and manly exercise. His mind was reasoning and profound, without being elegant; he was of a robust constitution and endured to all kinds of fatigue; his face was repulsively coarse. Of an unmanageable disposition, he was a pertinacious quarreller. There was one blemish in his courage—it was restless impatience that had constituted him almost a professed duellist.'<sup>2</sup> 'As a soldier,' says his intended biographer,<sup>3</sup> 'his personal courage and thorough knowledge of the military profession had distinguished him on many occasions, and in the art of fencing his skill was eminently conspicuous. His political reputation was sufficiently established, not only by the public missions in which he was employed, but also by the confidential situations he maintained in the secret correspondence of Louis XV., whose private protection and support he continued to enjoy, even during the inveterate persecution he experienced from the ministers of the French Court. In private life D'Eon was much esteemed, not only as a man, but during his assumed character of a woman; and though his natural inclinations, and the restraint he must ever have felt himself under, on account of his concealed sex, led him very much into retirement, yet in those societies where he

<sup>1</sup> Ch. MSS.

<sup>2</sup> *Histoire de France pendant le dix-huitième siècle*. Paris, 1810.

<sup>3</sup> Mr. Thomas William Plummer, intimately acquainted with the Chevalier, had undertaken, in 1804, to translate the ample material placed at his disposal, and produce a biography. From some unexplained cause this was never done.

did mix, his suavity of manner and obliging disposition always rendered him a welcome guest, whilst his various attainments, and the discordant characters he had sustained, gave to his person, especially as a supposed female, a degree of interest rarely excited by any individual. The shades in his character were, most inflexible tenacity of disposition, and a great degree of pride and self-opinion; general distrust and suspicion of others, and violence of temper which could brook no opposition. To these failings may be traced the principal misfortunes of his life; a life of much labour and suffering, mixed with very little repose.<sup>1</sup>

John Taylor had met the Chevalier in his advanced life at Mr. Angelo's, when he found that his former captivating manners must have undergone great alteration, for, although dressed as a woman, he spoke and acted with all the roughness of a veteran soldier. He was generally considered to be most intelligent, full of anecdote and fertile conversation, and it was believed that his name and extraordinary appearance would never be forgotten.

As to the tastes and habits of our subject, he certainly through life eschewed low society of whatsoever class. He was fond of good living, and in his palmy days kept his cellar well stocked with expensive Burgundies and Champagnes. He was hospitable and charitable, never forgetting more especially his poor relations; but it does not appear that he ever had the generosity to admit a fault to his neighbour, although frequently confessing his imperfections to God. He was an accepted freemason at the Lodge of Immortality at the Crown and Anchor in the Strand, not very zealous in his attendance. As a woman he rarely left the house except when socially called, was a con-

<sup>1</sup> *History and Topography of the Parish of St. Pancras.* London, 1729-1830.

firmed smoker, and no doubt employed cosmetics and wore feminine garments other than stays, as we are led to believe by the numerous cuttings of newspaper advertisements he has left behind. (A small red cross marked every piece of linen.) He spent his leisure indulging largely in writing, and in the study of his favourite authors, such as Cicero, Lucretius, Sallust, Virgil, Horace, Ovid, Juvenal, Tacitus—La Fontaine, Boileau, Racine, and Voltaire—Swift, and Addison from whom I have found quoted the apothegm that must have been like salve to his turbulent spirit: ‘A disturbed liberty is preferable to quiescent slavery.’ He was fond of reading the Psalms, frequently transcribing passages adapted to his changed condition and circumstances, and had perhaps realised—but how much too late!—his neglect of the admonition: ‘Put not your trust in princes’ . . . when, in writing his will, he expressed the hope that he might be able to retire to the Hermitage at Friburg, there to forget the world, and devote himself solely to God, ‘alone worthy of his homage.’

‘In religion,’ continues the intended biographer, ‘the Chevalier was a sincere Catholic, but divested of all bigotry; few were so well acquainted with the biblical writings or devoted more time to the study of religious subjects.’

A few extracts from the voluminous MSS. on sacred subjects in the Christie collection, should suffice to persuade us that D'Eon had indeed studied the Holy Scriptures, and faithfully interpreted, generally speaking, the doctrine of our Lord; but without entirely divesting himself of some of the teachings of the Church of Rome, upon whose servants he unsparingly casts obloquy similar to that heaped upon their successors



at the present day, in both hemispheres; for there is no exaggeration whatever in asserting that it is in Great Britain alone, where the spirit of 'fair play' rules every heart, that the Romish priesthood enjoys anything like consideration at the hands of its fellow subjects at large.

'1. I trust that wise measures will be taken for diminishing the large number of religionists of both sexes, who are depopulating the State to people monasteries, and that mankind will at last be persuaded of the preferableness of serving their King and country, to becoming voluntary eunuchs, unserviceable to the world, and frequently useless in the cause of religion.

'2. It is entirely repugnant to common sense, to the Word of God, and to custom in the primitive church, that public prayers should be offered up in public places, in a tongue not understood by those assembled for prayer.

'3. Were every priest, every confessor, an angel upon earth, I should advise everybody to confess; but as the greater number are demons, and men-wolves disguised in lamb-skins, I do not recommend men to do so—still less women—and still less again, young girls. Let all read the gospels, and especially the epistles of St. Paul; let them retire into their innermost chamber, let them confess their sins to God, abase themselves before Him, repair their faults, and exhort themselves to lead a better life.

'4. In Catholic countries, priests and apothecaries alike tease the sick.

'5. I see in the Church of Rome a chronological succession of the apostles of Jesus Christ, but I do not see the hereditary succession to their virtues. If Catholic priests are the precious depositaries of faith, it is to be found on their lips rather than in their hearts, or else they conceal the treasure so effectually that it is impossible to discover it in their conduct. Thus their faith, as well as their charity, is dead rather than living.

'6. Did religion not exist, independently of priests and monks, it would have been annihilated long since.

'7. Although he is the head of the Church, the Pope will soon be obliged to remain satisfied with his spiritual power, and

renounce all temporal power so incompatible with the maxims of Christ.

'8. Ecclesiastics have no difficulty in reminding themselves that they are but men, and thus forget they are priests.

'9. The study of the Holy Scriptures cannot be too strongly recommended, for it is the quickest and safest mode of becoming acquainted with the New Testament by means of the Old Testament, and with the Old Testament by means of the New, which is the fulfilment of prophecy. I have spent a portion of my life in reading commentaries on the Bible, chiefly those on the New Testament, and have found that commentators express themselves a hundred times less lucidly and with less force, than does the text itself, of the evangelists and apostles. Of what use, therefore, can be the piles of commentaries in the libraries of the Vatican, at Paris, Vienna, Madrid, London, Oxford, Cambridge, &c., except for burning, if they only serve to guide us by their obscure light, and are pernicious to the text.'<sup>1</sup>

About the year 1764 D'Eon wrote :—

'Since the time when I discovered that Love, the comforter of the human race, the regulator of the universe . . . Love, that ruler of hearts, that soul of our soul, to be worth no more than a kiss and twenty kicks . . . I have never wished for wife or mistress.'

And later, in 1777, upon assuming the garb of a female :—

' . . . I have never mixed myself up with those fond of dancing and similar amusements, and have never had anything to do with people of light character, who conduct themselves indiscreetly, and give way to their passions, following the maxims of the world.'<sup>2</sup>

The most perfect stranger to Charles XII. was Love! They had never nudged one another! This was not the case with the Chevalier D'Eon, who resembled Swift perhaps in more ways than one. In

<sup>1</sup> Ch. MSS.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

Mademoiselle Constance de Courcelles and the Countess de Rochefort (the latter, by the way, was a young widow), D'Eon had his Stella (short of wedlock) and Vanessa. Of the scenes of their love, we know nothing. He may have had a dozen Varinas, but I very much doubt it. Of Mademoiselle de Courcelles' letters he preserved a large packet for twenty years, and it may be, for longer, after their correspondence had ceased upon his assuming female attire. The Duke de Nivernois was in the habit of teasing him by introducing the name of the Countess, but this was the shortest-lived flirtation of the two, because the Chevalier remained in England and the Countess resided chiefly in France. Without actually avoiding the society of ladies, he never sought it—he *could not speak of that he did not feel*—and was never known, in the course of his career, to have been engaged in any amorous adventure or affair of gallantry as it was termed, whether at Court or in the camp, and this in an age when courtiers, like their sovereigns, were strangely given to profligacy. The old Marquis de l'Hôpital, an antiquated debauchee, who will be remembered as French ambassador at St. Petersburg, frequently twitted D'Eon on his cold temperament, but the latter preferred close application to his duty, working early and late, with fencing for recreation, to any kind of unsavoury indulgence. He never sought to wrong the decencies of life.

I am not aware that Swift's unfeeling treatment of the two women he after a fashion loved has ever been satisfactorily explained; whereas D'Eon himself, upon various occasions, assigns to physical causes his state of insensibility. Two examples will probably suffice:—

'I am sufficiently mortified at being what nature has made me, and that the dispassion of my natural temperament should

induce my friends to imagine in their innocence, and this in France, in Russia, and in England, that I am of the female sex. The malice of my enemies has confirmed all this. . . . 'If the Great Master of the universe has not endowed me with all the external vigour of manhood, He has amply made amends by gifting my head and heart. I am what the hands of God have made me; satisfied with my weakness, I would not exchange it for the dangerous strength of Marshal Saxe, even were it in my power to do so.'<sup>1</sup>

Most accounts agree, the one being taken from the other, that D'Eon's attainments included an acquaintance with ancient and modern languages. That this was not the case is evidenced by the contents of his library and the almost complete absence, amongst his MSS., of any note or quotation except in French or Latin; while forty years' residence in England did not suffice to teach him English.

A few reflections, written at intervals of time, might assist us in passing judgment on a life of so rare adventure, for t'were well, if we would be just, to estimate each touch of character at its true proportions, for entry whether on the credit or on the debtor side of the moralist's ledger.

'1. So long as a kingdom is under the domination of a woman, all will go well. Why? Because it is then that men will govern. (Written at St. Petersburg.)

'2. Nothing so much shows the sound judgment of a man, as to know how to choose between two evils.

'3. Freedom may be preserved, even where there is esteem and regard.

'4. An energetic will suffices to put into execution an object in view, but should anything chance to check it, force must absolutely be resorted to; and when I speak of force, I mean the force that is to be obtained from the consideration in which

<sup>1</sup> See p. 213. D'Eon to the Count de Broglio, February 10, 1775. Broglio, ii. 563, also pp. 218, 235.

one is held, by those very persons who have occasioned the wrong sought to be remedied, and of which they cannot deprive you since it already belongs to you, notwithstanding any personal dislike they may entertain, and which has arisen solely because of the opposition to their wishes.

‘5. It is the destiny of popular governments to be believed in only when they make themselves felt; and it is often to their interest and honour rather to make themselves believed in than felt.

‘6. Power in a people is to be deplored, since they do not consider themselves answerable even for acts they commit in spite of us.

‘7. Does familiarity with great dangers accustom us to be ready in resources? Well, do brilliant motives, glory, exertions, great sights, the destiny of nations in one’s power, raise humanity and elevate the soul by the vigorous exercise of all its faculties?’

And here we have a reflection after Raphael Aben-Ezra’s own heart!

‘8. ’Tis said, truthfully enough, that death makes all men equal; but it might also be said, with even greater truth, that it is his origin should humiliate man; for we are nothing but vile insects, more agile and more fortunate than thousands of millions of other similar insects, who have succeeded in insinuating ourselves into worthless vehicles where we have grown, and where we have become worthy of receiving from God a soul, that raises us to the dignity of humanity.

‘9. The absent are ever in the wrong, and untruths told with assurance easily silence truths told with disdain.

‘10. He who writes is certain to have as many judges as readers: but among this great number of judges, how many, may it be said, are really competent?

‘11. A master-mind looks upon minor incidents as victims to be sacrificed to affairs of greater importance.

‘12. To be above the caprice of fortune, not to be moved by her smiles or frowns, is to be high-souled. They who too easily betray their joy or sorrow, according to circumstances, possess neither strength of character nor courage, whatever their other merits.

'13. In France, we can construct perfectly good ships of war, but we cannot turn out efficient naval officers. This is the great misfortune in our country, which will ever give to the English the superiority at sea, through the excellence of their seamen and naval officers. In England, the son of the wealthiest and greatest nobleman will commence life as a sailor in a vessel of war under a good officer—but notwithstanding his influence, the King of France will never be able to do away with the prejudices and pride of our nobles, who aspire to being sea officers without knowing how to sail, even on fresh water.'

From the first moment when society, not in England only, stood perplexed at the enigma presented in the person of the Chevalière D'Eon, a variety of fugitive pieces, some acrimonious, others laudatory, of which she was the subject, appeared in the public prints on both sides of the Channel. With the necessarily limited selections for which we can find space, because we believe they form a fit sequel to the history of our archetype, we gratefully take leave of the reader, who will have had the kindness to accompany us thus far.

*Verses believed to have been written by an eminent Doctor of Divinity of the University of Oxford, and addressed to a friend of the Chevalier.*

Exul ades, nimium felix! tu victima veri,  
Causa boni, patriæ facta, D'Eone, tua est.  
Curia quondam habuit magnum Romana Catonem:  
Majorem sed habet jam Gallicana suum.

*Political Register, 1788.*

*A Mademoiselle ——— qui s'était déguisée en homme.*

Bonjour, fripon de Chevalier,  
Qui savez si bien l'art de plaire,  
Que, par un bonheur singulier,  
De nos beautés la plus sévère  
En faveur d'un tel écolier,  
Déposant son ton minaudier

Et sa sagesse grimacière,  
 Pourrait peut-être s'oublier,  
 Ou plutôt moins se contrefaire.  
 Mon cher, nous le savons trop bien :  
 (Le ciel en tout est bon et sage)  
 Pour un si hardi personnage,  
 Dans le fond vous ne valez rien.  
 Croyez-moi : reprenez un rôle  
 Que vous jouez plus sûrement :  
 D'un imposteur déguisement  
 Que votre sexe se console ;  
 Du mien vous faites le tourment ;  
 Et le vôtre, sur ma parole,  
 Vous doit son plus bel ornement.  
 Hélas ! malheureux que nous sommes !  
 Vous avez tout pour nous charmer :  
 C'est bien être au-dessus des hommes  
 Que de savoir s'en faire aimer !

M. D'ARNAUD.

*Almanach des Muses, 1771.**Lines on hearing a greyheaded lady called Miss.*

In humdrum, ancient days, the pretty name  
 Of Miss at twenty was exchange'd for Dame,  
 But these wise times to compliment exhort ye,  
 For modern *Misses* are full *five-and-forty*.

ELEVEN'S A NICK.

*The Westminster Gazette, October 8-12, 1778.*

*Quatrain pour le buste de Mademoiselle D'Eon, exécuté par  
 Madame Falconet.*

Ce marbre, où de D'Eon le buste est retracé,  
 A deux femmes assure une gloire immortelle ;  
 Et par elles vaincu, l'autre sexe est forcé  
 D'envier à la fois l'artiste et le modèle.

M. BLIN LE SAINMORE.

*Almanach des Muses, 1781.*

*Impromptu sur Mademoiselle D'Eon, qui lui a été remis à Londres  
par M. Angelo, père, maître d'armes de la famille Royale  
d'Angleterre.*

D'EON, ce double habit, qui frappe nos regards,  
Semble nous annoncer ton double caractère.  
Oui, tu sus dans la paix, au milieu des hazards,  
Cultiver d'une main politique et guerrière  
L'olive de Minerve, et les lauriers de Mars.

Ch. MSS.

*On Mademoiselle D'Eon's skill in fencing.*

A prodigy ! this Chevalier,  
A most unrivalled peerless Peer  
Is surely Monsieur D'Eon ;  
In arts of peace and war renown'd,  
As well as politics profound,  
And brave as Cœur-de-Lion.

In vain may time his page explore,  
To find a precedent of yore,  
As yet out-done by no man ;  
Let Britain boast her warlike sons,  
Or Asia of her amazons,  
While France can boast a woman.

Both sexes' admiration thou,  
A female and a manly brow,  
At once so oddly met ;  
Say, can ye sages yet decide  
Which, best or both, can D'Eon guide,  
The camp or cabinet.

*Old Newspapers.*



## ARGUMENT.

‘Toute histoire qui n’est pas contemporaine est suspecte.’—PASCAL.

Two events in the career of the Chevalier D'Eon, undisputed by his contemporaries, but controverted of late years, must ever give cause for despair to biographers, so long as they seek to determine, by written evidence alone—(1) That D'Eon went to St. Petersburg for the first time in 1755, appearing there in the disguise of a female. (2) That he declared himself to be a female, and permanently adopted female attire in the year 1777, solely in obedience to the commands of Louis XVI. and his ministers.

The objections raised by the non-contents to these earliest traditions is based uniquely on the complete absence of any documents in their direct support; how far such documents are indispensable the reader will judge in the face of much incidental evidence in their favour.

Boutaric (i. 81), writing in 1866, says: ‘About the year 1755 (*vers* 1755) was conducted a negotiation (during the interrupted diplomatic relations between France and Russia), from which the Count de Broglie was excluded, but wherein took part a personage whose name has become celebrated, the Chevalier D'Eon.’ It was with no greater precision, that the Archivist of the Empire was enabled to fix the date of the Chevalier Douglas’ departure for Russia (no great matter for surprise) seeing that *neither amongst the national*

*archives, nor at the ministry for foreign affairs, are to be found any papers whatever relating to Douglas' first journey to Russia!*<sup>1</sup> A deficiency, however, that has been supplied by Vandal (p. 263), and at p. 12 of this book upon the authority of the British ambassador at St. Petersburg, the arrival at the Russian capital of the King of France's secret agent having unquestionably taken place in October, 1755. That D'Eon went with Douglas appears from several of the Chevalier's indirect statements to that effect, and by some fortuitous but very forcible testimony.

## D'EON.

To the Duke de Praslin, August 28, and September 13, 1763. Appeals earnestly for pecuniary assistance to enable him to pay off a loan he had contracted *nine years previously*, to enable him to proceed to Russia on duty for the King, upon his first journey with the Chevalier Douglas, which was the origin of all the negotiations of the Court of Versailles with that of St. Petersburg. (See also 'Covenant,' p. 246.)

In the *Note* to the Count de Guerchy, 1763, D'Eon styles himself as having been '*sent to Russia with the Chevalier Douglas for the reunion of the two Courts*,' and being afterwards secretary of Embassy at the Court of Elizabeth.

In the '*Discours Préliminaire*' to the '*Lettres, Mémoires*,' &c., published in 1764. '*Towards the end of the year 1755, my destiny dragged me into diplomacy, although I was inclined rather for a soldier's life.*'

To Beaumarchais, January 7, 1776. (See pp. 267 and 271.) 'You know how I have upon six occasions

## OTHER AUTHORITIES.

La Messalière, p. 74. '*Douglas awaited at Anhalt the arrival of D'Eon from Paris, and on reaching St. Petersburg they pretended to be merchants of low degree*,' &c.

Flassan, vi. 110. '*Woronzoff and D'Eon were the intermediaries in the correspondence between Louis XV. and Elizabeth.*'

The Marquis de l'Hôpital to the Duke de Choiseul, August 23, 1760. 'The services of M. D'Eon in foreign affairs are well known. *He has not a little contributed to the renewing of the alliance with Russia.*'

The Chevalier Douglas to M. Rouillé, St. Petersburg, 1756. 'I am very greatly pleased at the arrival of M. D'Eon. *I have been long acquainted with his intelligence, his zeal, and attachment to his work.*'

'Gazette d'Utrecht,' No. xlii., 1757. '*M. D'Eon de Beaumont who has been at work under the Chevalier Douglas, Minister Plenipotentiary for France, during the whole time of his negotiations with this Court, &c. The Empress' gift of 500 ducats is*

<sup>1</sup> Vandal, 264.

D'EON.

flown from one end of the world to the other, travelling night and day, to hasten in 1755 and 1756 the reunion of France and Russia.'

Note written in 1776. 'I know how to conduct myself abroad . . . with the prudence and policy acquired by long experience and a residence of twenty-two years in foreign lands,' see p. 243.

To the Count de Vergennes, May 28, 1776. ' . . . None but those concerned were informed of this political intrigue, commenced in 1755 by the Prince de Conti and Tercier, and executed by the Chevalier Douglas and myself only.'

OTHER AUTHORITIES.

the result of the esteem and goodwill he has gained for himself at this Court during his stay.' *St. Petersburg Correspondence.*

The Duke de Nivernois to M. de Bertin, Controller-General of Finance, October 12, 1762. '*M. D'Eon has already been employed upon several occasions at the Court of Russia, under critical and most important circumstances.*'

Royal warrant of August 25, 1775, granting permission to Mademoiselle D'Eon to wear the cross of St. Louis in female attire. 'His Majesty desiring to mark by special favour his sense of the public and secret services, in war and in diplomacy, which the said Mademoiselle D'Eon de Beaumont has had the good fortune to render during upwards of twenty years, consecutively, to the late King,' &c., see p. 254.

I would add under this head, for what it is worth, that the anecdotes related by D'Eon concerning himself in Russia have been taken from a note-book, '*Recueil de mes Pensées*,' dated 1754.

The non-contents maintain, that until he became secretary of Embassy, nothing was known of D'Eon. I ask in reply: How came a young, untried, and unknown individual to be appointed secretary to the French Embassy in Russia, during a crisis in the affairs of the two countries?

A first incitement to the persuasion that D'Eon's earliest introduction at St. Petersburg was in the character of a female, exists in the portrait by La Tour. When D'Eon was in his twenty-fifth (or more probably twenty-seventh<sup>1</sup>) year, La Tour was a greatly esteemed

<sup>1</sup> Frequent errors have been made in the Chevalier's age. The date of

and general favourite ; he had painted a full length picture of Louis XV., and portraits of Madame de Pompadour and many others at Court, and as it is scarcely credible, from what we know of his circumstances in those days, that D'Eon was in a position to employ an artist of established reputation to paint a fancy portrait of himself for himself, and this apart from his known innate dislike to any such travesty, we perhaps see personified in the comely young woman at page 14, a representation of *le petit D'Eon*, as he was expected, by the Prince de Conti, shortly to make his appearance at the Russian capital.

In recapitulating his services to the Duke de Praslin (June 5, 1763) D'Eon showed that when sent to Petersburg by M. Rouillé, in 1756, for secret and important motives, reasons of policy required that certain views entertained with regard to himself, and for which he felt some repugnance, should be abandoned ; whereupon he received the minister's orders to remain with Douglas until the arrival of the new ambassador. What but a repetition of the part he played in 1755 is to be understood from his repugnance to perform duties assigned to him ! It was quite beyond D'Eon's power to endure from others any allusion to his effeminate appearance or physical defects, and he studiously eschewed all reference to his assumption of female attire, by rarely specifying his first visit to St. Petersburg as having been in 1755, preferring to allude in general terms to his 'earliest journeys to Russia.' Instances there are, as we have shown, to the contrary, but this was at a time when there no longer existed any object in concealing the past so very carefully, and

birth on his coffin-plate was October 17, 1727 ; and the Duke de Broglie imputes to him forty-three years, *bien sonnés*, in 1775.

when admission to that effect was only too likely, as he thought, to turn to his advantage. See p. 247 note, and p. 267.

It was not his fault, he told the Count de Broglio, if the Princess Dashkoff assured people in England that he was a female; and it is true that *after the arrival of that lady in London, fresh reports were circulated tending to confirm the suspicions already entertained that the Chevalier was indeed a woman.*

There is preserved in the public library at Tonnerre a note from the old Marquis de l'Hôpital to D'Eon, written in a spirit of pleasantry, and although undated, is obviously of the last half of 1759, or of the first half of 1760.

'Noon.

'However great my pleasure would be at seeing you, I have no wish, *ma chère Lia*, to have to reproach myself with committing another folly. Therefore remain shut up until your eyes are quite well again. . . . I shall perhaps call to see you, some day after to-morrow, so soon as my lame courier will have left. This will depend upon what the Chancellor is going to do, and on my fancy. Adieu, *ma belle de Beaumont*. I embrace you.

L'HOPITAL.'

'A Monsieur D'Eon, St. Petersburg.'

Could Lia have been the name adopted by D'Eon during his disguise in 1755, or are we to believe that it was playfully applied by the ambassador to the secretary suffering from ophthalmia, because 'Leah was tender-eyed?'

The secret autograph order of Louis XV., dated October 4, 1763 (p. 104), is sufficiently significative, and can only have reference to the Chevalier's earliest connection with Russia, because from August, 1756, he was officially recognised as secretary of Embassy, until

his final departure for France in August, 1760, after which he fell ill of small-pox. Early in 1761 he joined the army in the field, served as aide-de-camp to the de Broglies throughout the campaign of that year, and upon his return to France went on leave, whilst awaiting the appointment of minister plenipotentiary to Russia, which, he wrote to tell his colonel, the Marquis d'Autichamp, would take him to St. Petersburg for the fourth time. See '*Lettres, Mémoires,*' &c.

Madame Campan had frequently heard the Chevalier repeat to her father, M. Genest, the contents of Louis XV.'s order, in which that monarch separated his individuality from the person of the King of France. She had special opportunities afterwards, as lady-in-waiting to the queen, for becoming acquainted with D'Eon's character during his two years' residence at the Court of Marie Antoinette and in its precincts, and she long survived him, dying in 1822; we may therefore legitimately assume that had his veracity been generally mistrusted, or had she doubted the existence of such an order, she would assuredly have qualified his statement, unless she had cause to be satisfied that the order, which it is pretty certain she never saw, was indeed in the King's own hand.

Dutens' version is to this effect. The King had a secret minister at the several Courts, who carried out his views without the knowledge of his ambassador. This was the position at the Court of Russia of the Chevalier D'Eon, sent thither upon the recommendations of the Prince de Conti, who was not even aware of his sex. He spent several months at St. Petersburg, and was clever enough to secure presentation to the Empress Elizabeth in the character of a female, and

conclude in fifteen days an affair upon which the ambassador had been for a long time engaged.

The earliest intimation of D'Eon's somewhat familiar intercourse with Elizabeth appears in the work of de la Fortelle, of whom the Chevalier says:—'*Il m'a élevé un monument de gloire dans son grand ouvrage.*' According to this author, D'Eon was received at the Russian Court in a secret capacity, and having succeeded in making himself agreeable in the sight of the Empress, and secured the good-will of her favourite minister, his consummate tact enabled him to approach the sovereign, to converse with and gradually interest her, and having secured her Majesty's confidence, he prepared her mind to receive impressions favourable to the cause he had at heart.

Did D'Eon permanently adopt female attire in 1777, solely in obedience to the commands of Louis XVI. and his ministers?

In Kirby's '*Wonderful and Eccentric Museum*' is quoted from the '*Gazette de Santé*,' a periodical of the day, an article that appeared soon after the Chevalier's decease, and which we feel bound to give at length.

It is singular enough that while all Europe was making a woman of this dubious character, there existed in Paris many unimpeachable witnesses who would have vouched for his manhood long before it was put in question. We have had the following details from the Baron de Cleybrocke, who has authorised us to publish them:—

'The Chevalier D'Eon received his first education at M. Tarnier's, the schoolmaster, Rue de Nevers, Paris; there was in that school an usher, M. Vicaire, since rector of the University, and previously tutor to young Cleybrocke, to whom he had often affirmed, when the question was started in London on the sex of the Chevalier, that he had many a time conducted D'Eon to bathe with his other scholars, and was positive that he was a

man. What reason then could have induced Government to condemn a soldier who had obtained military orders, and a respectable diplomatic character, to assume the dress of a woman, when his boldness, his propensities, his constant habits, his love intrigues, and even his beard and his figure, gave the lie to his dress! Some politicians think that they have found the reason of this strange conduct on the part of the Government in the means that intriguing character had made use of to succeed in his secret diplomacy, and which were such, they say, that the discovery of his real sex might have lowered the dignity of the French Government, and disturbed the peace, as well as sullied the honour of many families, in which D'Eon had been received with that unbounded confidence which women grant to a woman only. They strengthen their opinion by the report current in Paris, when the Chevalier was ordered to assume female attire, that he had the alternative of obeying, or ending his days in the Bastille, in consequence of the irregularities he had committed under cover of the sex to which he had pretended to belong, to ensure the success of his secret diplomatic negotiations. This conjecture is still further confirmed by the testimony of two of his former schoolfellows, who, on hearing a report which they were positive was unfounded, were impelled by curiosity to visit D'Eon. They found him in bed. "What will you have me do?" said he, when they had explained the object of their visit; "they have ordered me to be a woman, and I wear petticoats by command of the King."

From this kind of declaration D'Eon never swerved, always maintaining that he was forced to pass for a woman, and it will be remembered that when resisting the pressure put upon him by Beaumarchais, he reminded that unyielding negotiator that it was Louis XV. and the Duke d'Aiguillon, Louis XVI. and the Count de Vergennes, and the de Guerchy family who demanded his metamorphosis.

The theory put forward by Gaillardet, that D'Eon himself confirmed the general belief in his being a female, is based upon two passages in letters to Beau-



marchais: 'I admit with pleasure, although with the pain, the shame, and the tears that the avowal and admission of my own weakness have wrung from me,' and, 'I have made known to you the mystery of my sex.' That Beaumarchais seriously believed D'Eon to be a woman is beyond any manner of doubt, but that D'Eon confessed so much to him spontaneously, the idea having emanated from himself, is anything but proved, if proof rests solely on the above two short extracts. Dutens, styled by D'Eon, 'mon honorable ami,' and who was well acquainted with Beaumarchais ('j'ai beaucoup connu Beaumarchais'), was told by the dramatic writer that he was perfectly assured of the sex of the extraordinary woman—but that was all! And he relates, as he had heard it, the cause which led to the Chevalier's change of sex.

The Countess de Guerchy attributed the death of her husband to grief, consequent upon the ridicule with which he had been covered by the Chevalier D'Eon, and she warned the Count de Maurepas that if D'Eon dared to land in France, her son should await him at Calais to fight him, and if her son fell, she had a son-in-law ready to take his place. Greatly amused at hearing this, D'Eon was reported to have said: 'Very well, I will put an end to all this. I declare I am a woman.' Unfortunately, Dutens does not give his authority for this story, the latter part of which is entirely inconsistent with the impatience we have seen exhibited by D'Eon to fight young de Guerchy, and to afford him the opportunity for avenging his father.

If we look at the order of Louis XVI., dated August 25, 1775, instructing Beaumarchais to recover the papers out of D'Eon's hands, we find the latter named in the masculine gender; and although Beaumarchais

distinctly individualises D'Eon as being a woman, in none of de Vergennes' despatches is he spoken of otherwise than as if he were a man, and that minister goes so far as to say that if the Chevalier would disguise himself—'si M. D'Eon voulait se travestir'—all should be well. (See p. 239.)

The author of the attractive and somewhat laborious work, 'Beaumarchais et son Temps,' calls attention to the piquancy in D'Eon's letters to Beaumarchais, acting admirably, as he does, the part of a woman concealed under the guise of a man; at the same time adopting an ambiguous style, as if with the view of making it clear at any such time eventually as his fraud would be discovered, that he had been duping so astute a man as the author of 'Le Barbier de Seville,' and that whilst duping him, to his face, he was also making fun of him, without his being sensible of it. On the other hand, Beaumarchais amused himself at the expense of the love-sick *vieille dragonne*, becoming the more confirmed in his error, as D'Eon continued to counterfeit the wrath of an offended old maid.

The Chevalier's letters to Louis XVI. (Ch. MSS.) make it sufficiently clear that the King could not have been positively assured on his sex. In one letter D'Eon informs his Majesty that he continued to maintain silence in respect to his position, which was so singular and extraordinary, as to be without parallel in ancient or modern history. He had kept his secret profoundly, because it was the secret of secrets of the late King, and he entreated his Majesty either to allow two Councillors of State, in whom he had implicit confidence, to write down his depositions and the proofs to them, before he returned to France, or permit him to publish his defence.

In another letter, the King is told that the question of sex will soon be decided, after the Court will have restored the honour and money due to him. 'I can then think of settling down, and in marrying, make known to which sex I belong.'

In a third letter, the Chevalier points out that negotiations for his return to France were conducted from 1770 to 1775, and that his letter to the Count de Broglio of January 1775, was sent under flying seal to the Count de Vergennes, to enable that minister to become well acquainted with the validity of some of his arguments, and communicate them for his Majesty's consideration.

Lacretelle, Taylor, and others, are unable to account for the Chevalier's change of sex, otherwise than that it was produced by some unexplained intrigue, and that he was directed by the French Government to appear as a woman, for reasons which have never been satisfactorily determined. Voltaire wrote, that the whole affair puzzled him. He was unable to picture to himself either D'Eon, or the ministers of his day, or the acts of Louis XV., or what was passing then (1777). He knew nothing of any of them. In returning, however, to the pages of Madame Campan, we seem to find the key to the situation.

'This strange personage,' says that lady, 'had for a long time solicited permission to return to France, but it was considered necessary to spare the family (de Guerchy) he had offended the insult it would feel were he to make his appearance; he was therefore compelled to resume the costume of a sex to which everything is forgiven in France. Anxiety to see his native country no doubt influenced him in submitting to such a condition; but he had his revenge, for, whilst wearing a gown with its long train, and a triple row of sleeves, he bore himself and behaved like a grenadier, giving himself an air of unmistakable vulgarity.'

Might not every secret in which this mystery was involved have been hidden in the *valise* containing 'papers that had belonged to the King and Court,' given to the French minister plenipotentiary by D'Eon, on February 1, 1792? (See note, p. 264, p. 324.)

The Count de Vergennes, the minister immediately responsible for the ludicrous innovation, confessed to Beaumarchais his concern lest D'Eon should make his appearance in France as a man, his enemies being on the alert, and not likely to forgive him easily for all he had said of them; and when writing to the Chevalier, two years later, he impressed upon him the conditions, should he think of returning to his native land. (See p. 283.)

The question has also arisen—Granted that D'Eon was obliged to appear as a woman, by command of King and ministers, such being the stipulation for his receiving the royal grant of twelve thousand livres, annually; why, after the fall of the monarchy and having lost all by the French Revolution, did he continue in the anomalous character of a female? We, in England, are able to understand, that to one who had spent so many years of his life in this country, and had become familiar with the sentiments and susceptibilities of English men and women, there was no choice. It had long been known and admitted that the Chevalière had been treated by French ministers with peculiar harshness, and she was seen to be reduced to absolute want at the advanced age of sixty-four! Under circumstances such as these, he must have felt that so long as he was believed to be a female, commiseration and assistance were to be expected; but to declare himself a man, after having adopted female attire and been admitted into the intimacies of female society over a period of sixteen years,

would have been to expose himself—to summary castigation? That he did not fear; but to what would have been dreaded infinitely more than famine by one with his antecedents—the ridicule and scorn of all who knew anything about him; and so he elected to continue to the end of his days, dressing, writing, and speaking as if he were a woman, but otherwise conducting himself in all respects with the freedom belonging to a man.

We adhere to our engagement not to judge the individual who presents such startling episodes in his life, and contrasts in his character. It has hitherto been his fate to be classed, it may be said, amongst the adventurers of which the last century was sufficiently prolific; these pages will perhaps assist to remove him out of that order and place him where he should stand—alone, as a physiognomical marvel. We would in a measure plead for him, in Johnson's words in behalf of poor Goldsmith—'Let not his failings be remembered'—for his faults were but failings. Of this victim to envy, malice, and all uncharitableness, we have read clearly enough how sinned against he was, far more than he had ever himself sinned against others. All he suffered he had to endure for serving an ungrateful King too faithfully, oblivious that *promesse des grands n'est pas héritage*, while his attachment to his country was sublime, entitling him amongst his countrymen at home to Florian's epitaph,

Il vécut toujours en Angleterre,  
Mais son cœur fut toujours ici.

Loyal beyond compare, he ever continued true to one and the other, frequently under unexceptionably trying circumstances, repeating and again repeating:

‘ Comme Français, je puis regarder le sacrifice de ma fortune comme la dette de mon amour pour le Roi. Comme militaire et Chevalier de Saint Louis, je dois même lui sacrifier ma vie ; mais pour celui de mon honneur, il n’est pour personne ! ’

## WORKS AND PUBLICATIONS

BY THE

CHEVALIER D'EON DE BEAUMONT.

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Eloge de Marie d'Est, Duchesse de Penthièvre. In the *Année Littéraire*.

Eloge du Comte d'Ons-en-Bray, Président de l'Académie des Sciences à Paris. In the *Année Littéraire*.

Situation de la France par rapport aux Finances sous le règne de Louis XIV. et la Régence du Duc d'Orléans. 1753. 8vo.

Mémoire sur la Vie et les Ouvrages de Lenglet Dufresnoy. In the *Année Littéraire*, 1755.

Considérations Historiques sur les Impôts des Egyptiens, des Babyloniens, des Perses, des Grecs, des Romains, et sur les différentes situations de la France, par rapport aux Finances, depuis l'établissement des Francs dans la Gaule jusqu'à présent. 2 tomes. 1758. 12mo.

Les Espérances d'un bon Patriote (dans une lettre à M. Fréron, et publiée dans son *Année Littéraire*, 1759, tom. vi.).

Note remise à son Excellence Monsieur le Comte de Guerchy, par Monsieur le Chevalier D'Eon. 1763.

Lettres, Mémoires et Négotiations Particulières du Chevalier D'Eon, Ministre Plénipotentiaire de France auprès du Roi de la Grande Bretagne ; avec Mrs. les Ducs de Praslin, de Nivernois, de Sainte-Foy, et Regnier de Guerchy, etc. etc.

*Vita sine litteris mors est.*

A Londres, M.DCC.LXIV. In 4to and 8vo.

Pièces Relatives aux Lettres, Mémoires et Négotiations Particulières du Chevalier D'Eon, Ministre Plénipotentiaire de

France auprès du Roi de la Grande Bretagne, contenant La Note, Contre-Note, Lettre à Mr. le Duc de Nivernois, et l'Examen des Lettres, Mémoires, etc. A Londres, M.DCC.LXIV. 8vo.

Pièces Autentiques pour servir au Procès Criminel intenté au Tribunal du Roi d'Angleterre par le Chevalier D'Eon de Beaumont, Ministre Plénipotentiaire de France, contre Claude Louis François Regnier, Comte de Guerchy, Ambassadeur Extraordinaire de France auprès de Sa Majesté Britannique.

Le trône a-t-il été pour vous associé à l'iniquité ? Vous qui vous servez de l'autorité qui vous a été conférée pour exercer des injustices.

A Londres, 1765. 12mo.

Dernière Lettre du Chevalier D'Eon à M. le Comte de Guerchy, en date du 5 Août 1767, avec l'extrait de la Procédure en bonne forme.

Le sacrifice de ma vie a été et sera pour mon roi et ma patrie ; celui de mon honneur ne sera pour personne.

A Londres, 1767. 4to.

Les Loisirs du Chevalier D'Eon de Beaumont, Ancien Ministre Plénipotentiaire de France, sur Divers Sujets importants d'Administration etc., pendant Son Séjour en Angleterre.

*Eruditio inter prospera ornamentum, inter adversa refugium.*—*LAERTIUS.*

A Amsterdam, M.DCC.LXXIV. 13 tom. 8vo.

Recueil des Pièces relatives aux Démêlés entre Mademoiselle D'Eon et M. de Beaumarchais, imprimées à Londres, 1778. 12mo.

Epître aux Anglois dans leurs tristes Circonstances présentes. 1788. 8vo.

#### MSS.

Vade Mecum, ou Dictionnaire Portatif de la Créance des Saints Pères, puisé dans les livres mêmes des Ministres Protestans. Divisé par Chapitres et digéré par ordre alphabétique. Ou, Manuel des Chrétiens catholiques ; ou Nomenclature Théologique. pp. 454, 8vo.



Mémoires, Documens, Remarques, Extraits et Notes Instructives, recueillis par la Chevalière D'Eon, pour servir à la Vie du Comte de Vauban né le 12 Mai 1633, mort Maréchal de France, à Paris, le 30 Mars 1707, âgé de 74 ans.

La chevalière D'Eon s'est occupée long-tems de ce grand Travail ; mais ses anciennes Occupations militaires, politiques et littéraires, sans compter les querelles d'Allemands et la guerre civile et incivile qu'elle a soutenue pendant des longues années en Angleterre, ont consommé et consumé ses plus belles années. Après 86 ans de Travaux militaires et politiques, elle ne se trouve pas assez riche, et elle est trop vieille aujourd'hui, pour entreprendre et finir un Ouvrage aussi savant et aussi considérable etc. etc. etc.



## APPENDIX.

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THEY who have seen the face of the *eiserne jungfrau* in the dread dungeon of the Inquisition at Nuremberg, even though by the lurid light of the keeper's candle-stuffs, will experience little difficulty in figuring to themselves the habitual expression of the Chevalier D'Eon's features, where every sentiment implanted by nature and conveyed in the open face, intelligent eyes, and well-shaped nose, was subjugated by the agitated spirit of sarcasm and disdain that kept rippling, as it were, out of the spacious brow, and overspreading the otherwise attractive countenance.

In the various portraits herewith described, the Chevalier or Chevalière D'Eon is represented in female attire except in those marked \*.

1. Angelica Kauffmann after Latour. Francis Haward, R.A., sculptait (*mezzo-tinto*) published (by the engraver), January 18, 1788, from the picture in the collection of George Keate, Esq.

Carola Genovefa Louisa Augusta Andrea Timothea D'Eon de Beaumont, Knight of the Royal and Military Order of St. Louis, Captain of Dragoons and the Volunteers of the Army, Aide-de-Camp to the Maréchal Duke and Count de Broglie, Minister Plenipotentiary from the King of France to the King of Great Britain in 1768. Born at Tonnerre, October 5, 1728. Painted in her twenty-fifth year. (See p. 14, from a photograph by C. Prætorius.)

To represent D'Eon de Beaumont as a Chevalière of the Royal and Military Order of Saint Louis at the age of twenty-five, is an anomaly. The cross in this picture may have been introduced by Angelica Kauffmann<sup>1</sup> when she copied La Tour's portrait, or it may have been added many years after its execution, by La Tour himself, before Angelica Kauffmann saw it.

<sup>1</sup> Angelica Kauffmann was for a long time a neighbour of the Chevalier, her residence being in Golden Square.

His biographer gives authority for such a conjecture where he says: 'Towards the close of his life, the mind of this artist began to give way. He vitiated a large number of his works by retracing them, under the pretext that in a portrait everything should be sacrificed to the head.'

2. \*Mackenzie sc. LE CHEVALIER D'EON (beardless).

3. Printed for S. Hooper, 25 Ludgate Hill, 25 January, 1771 (*mezzo-tinto*, full length). The Discovery or Female Free-mason. Lady Charles Louis Cezar Augustus Alexander Timotheus D'Eon de Beaumont (here follow style and titles) and accepted free-mason at the lodge of Immortality at the 'Crown and Anchor' in the Strand.

4. \*Huquier, pinxt; Burke, fecit. Published as the Act directs, August 7, 1771, by I. Wesson. THE CHEVALIER D'EON. (See p. 208, from a photograph by C. Prætorius.)

5. Published as the Act directs by S. Hooper, Ludgate Hill, 20 March, 1778 (*mezzo-tinto*). Represented as Minerva, with lance and shield, upon the latter this legend: At nunc dura dedit vobis discrimina Pallas. On one side: Impavidam ferient ruinae. A long inscription in English, concludes: Læssæ sed invictæ Palladi, per bella, per acta publica in patriæ suæ honorem et famam inclytæ, cujus virtutes nec inimici vituperare, pauci homines imitari possunt. Exul mi Deone, ne quidem ossa patria habeat! In perpetuum amoris monumentum offerebant amici sociales milites.

6. Dessiné et Gravé par J. B. Bradel d'après nature et les Originaux communiqués par Mademoiselle D'Eon à ce Seul Artiste. Charlotte Geneviève Louise Auguste Andrée Timothée D'Eon de Beaumont (here follow style and titles) *Ætatis 35.*<sup>1</sup> A la Mémoire des Héroïnes Françaises, Jeanne D'Arc, Jeanne Hachette, etc. etc.

7. Frontispiece to 'La Vie Militaire, Politique et Privée de Mademoiselle D'Eon de Beaumont, etc.': by de la Fortelle, 1779. LA CHEVALIÈRE D'EON DE BEAUMONT, Née en 1728.

8. A. Støttrup sc. 1779. Same as 7.

9. Painting in oils, life size. CHEVALIER D'EON, 1782. (See Frontispiece, from a photograph by Arthur King.)

In a short biographical notice of the Chevalier D'Eon, dated 1812 (?), at the back of this canvas, allusion being made to the trial on sex policies, it is asserted—'Sir Joshua Reynolds was in Court during the trial and requested the Chevalier to pay him a visit, which he did in female attire on 4 August, 1777,

<sup>1</sup> This is an error. Bradel was born in 1750.

when this Sketch was taken of the Chevalier by Sir Joshua, and presented by him in 1782 to his friend Sir Wm. Chambers.'

According to this statement, the signature to which is indistinct, the sketch of the Chevalier was taken when in his fiftieth year, and completed in 1782, the date inscribed by the artist to the left of the figure, whilst the Chevalière, then in her fifty-sixth year, was residing in France!

This picture is now the property of General Meredith Read, New York, U.S.A.

10. Dupin (Pierre?) artist and engraver. Charles-Geneviève-Louis-Auguste-César-André-Timothée D'Eon de Beaumont, née à Tonnerre, en 1728 (here follow style and titles). A Paris chez Esnauts et Rapilly.

11. Peint par Ducreux, de l'Académie Impériale et Royale de Vienne. Gravé par Cathelin, de l'Académie Royale de Peinture et Sculpture à Paris. *Læssæ sed invictæ Palladi.* Name, style, and titles close with . . . plus célèbre encore par sa Vertu que par son nom. Pensionnaire de Louis XV. et de Louis XVI. Née à Tonnerre, le 5 8<sup>bre</sup>, 1728. *Ætatis 58.*

12. Cosway, R.A., 1787. Thos. Chambers sculpsit. Published July 12, 1787. LA CHEVALIÈRE D'EON.

13. Painted by Robineau. Engraved by V. M. Picot. From a picture of Robin-eau's in the possession of His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales. Published June 20, 1789, by V. M. Picot. Dedicated by Permission to His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales. The assault or Fencing-Match which took place between Mademoiselle La Chevalière D'Eon de Beaumont and Monsieur de Saint-George, on the 9th of April, 1787, at Carlton House, in the presence of His Royal Highness, several of the Nobility, and many eminent Fencing Masters of London.

14. J. Condé delin. et sculp. LA CHEVALIÈRE D'EON, née à Tonnerre, le 8 8<sup>bre</sup>, 1728.

15. Published by I. Sewall, March 1, 1791 (for the 'European Magazine'). Same as 14.

16. Medallion portrait. *Vigil audax*—by J. Condé, published June 24, 1791, upon the occasion of the entertainment given by the Managers of Ranelagh for the benefit of the Chevalière D'Eon. . . . deprived of a considerable part of her fortune by the odious detention of a deposit. *Minerve Gauloise*, née à Tonnerre, le 5 8<sup>bre</sup>, 1728. *Proprio Marte Tuta.* The French artist who engraved this plate designed it for a monument of English generosity and French gratitude.

*Dic mihi, Virgo ferox, cum sit tibi cassis et hasta,*

*Quare non habeas Ægida? Cæsar habet.*

*Pax est fœminæ generis, dat fœmina pacem;*

*Quæ Bellona fuit nunc Dea pacis erit.*

17. Dance, R.A., 26 May, 1793. Engraved by William Daniell, August 15, 1810. **THE CHEVALIÈRE D'EON.** This profile, to the left, was drawn at the request of Mr. W. Seward, F.R.S.

18. Robert Cooper sculp. Published July 2, 1810, by J. Bell, Southampton Street, Strand. Engraved for *La Belle Assemblée*. Same as 14.

19. From a Cast taken after death. Engraved by C. Turner from the Cast taken May 24, 1810, in the presence of J. C. Carpus, Esq. and Dr. Pearson. Published June 29, 1810, by C. Turner. **THE CHEVALIER D'EON.**

A tinted engraving of the *torso*, from a drawing by C. Turner, was published with the surgical attestation (see p. 331) by C. Turner, June 14, 1810. This print was never sold publicly, and was not to be obtained without an order from a magistrate.

### CARICATURES.

In September 1777 was executed for the 'London Magazine'—*Mademoiselle de Beaumont, or the Chevalier D'Eon. Female Minister Plenipo., Capt. of Dragoons, etc. etc.*—a full-length figure, the right half being a lady holding a fan, and the left half a man in uniform, with hat under the arm.

In Paris was published a print similar to the above, illustrating both sexes, inscribed—*Dédié aux dragons de l'armée.*

Another sketch that appeared in London, in 1778, represented the right half of a dragoon, with drawn sword in hand, back to back with the right half of a lady.

Hail! Thou production most uncommon,  
Woman half-man and man half-Woman!

In a caricature, by Gillray, of the *Assaut d'armes* at Carlton House in April 1787 (see pp. 308, 367), we see 'the Chevalière D'Eon making a successful thrust and hitting Saint George in his right arm. A railing divides the combatants from a highly select audience, in which the Prince of Wales occupies the post of honour, while Mrs. Fitzherbert sits on his right hand, and a crowd of political and fashionable worthies exhibit the greatest interest in the contest.'

Other ludicrous drawings of this fencing-match made their appearance at about the same time.

Needless to observe that the Chevalière D'Eon did not escape being made the subject of foul and obscene illustrations, in the same way in which it had become the fashion to treat the most distinguished and highest in the land!

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